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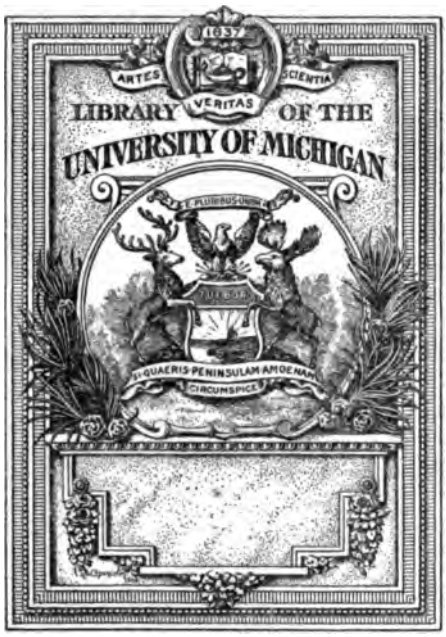
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Memoir of

John Nichol

Professor of English Literature in the University of Glasgow

60619

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INTRODUCTION.

IT has fallen to me, as senior literary executor of the late Professor Nichol, to write his *Memoir*, bringing into it the story of his academic career, and his work as a man of letters.

In the collection and arrangement of biographical material I have been greatly indebted to Mr. Pringle Nichol, who has sent me the very interesting record of his father's early years, written in the year 1861, and called "Leaves from my Life." This chapter, the work of Nichol's young manhood, seems to me to be almost unique in modern autobiography. His son has also supplied me with a narrative of events in his father's life while a student at Glasgow, and with various facts as to the movements of the Nichol household after they settled in Glasgow, as well as of their last years in London. He has sent me a chronicle of some vacation rambles, with many interesting letters, and an account of the closing days. Most of the last section of Chapter XI. was originally written by him.

I am also greatly indebted for facts, letters, and suggestions to Professor Nichol's sister, Mrs. Jack, 10 The College, Glasgow.

Estimates of the man, of his character and work, have reached me from many quarters. The contributions of old friends at Oxford and Glasgow, such as Professor Dicey, Sheriff Mackay, Mr. Berkley, and Dr. Macleod—along with what has been written by later friends, such as Principal Ward and Dr. Grindrod—have supplied much. The letters of fellow-collegians,—Drs. Brown and Mackennal,—

of students who were also friends, Professor MacCormick and Mr. Dunn,—and of Nichol's former teachers, Professor Lushington and the late Master of Balliol,—have added more.

I desire, here and now, to express my thanks to all who have contributed to make the *Memoir* less unworthy than it would have been without their aid.

A contemporary, who has written one delightful biography, said to me the other day: "I have made many enemies by telling the simple truth." It is often as desirable, however, to leave things unsaid as to say them, in the memoirs of a literary man; and the question which a biographer has constantly to ask himself, in reference to an incident or a letter, is: Will this be a real mirror of character, or of achievement? and will its publication be of any use to posterity? My own idea of biography is that its writer should collect facts impartially, and let these facts speak for themselves. But, when materials are abundant, and derived from many quarters, it seems more courteous to the contributors—as well as better for the subject of the biography—to print reminiscences in the form in which they were originally written, than to weave them, as some have suggested, into a monological record of the life. I do not believe in the value and interest, or even in the justice, of such composite work; however generous it is of writers to sink their own individuality, and allow their contributions to be used at discretion. When many traverse the same ground, and repeat the same story, excision becomes necessary: and this is often a very difficult task, as no contributor can know what others have written; but, in the case of our common friend, I rejoice that all have had but one desire, viz., that there should be as adequate a memorial as is now possible of the man and his work, and that what they have sent should be utilized accordingly.

The list of Nichol's correspondents is remarkable; he knew so many of the distinguished men of his time. But it is a matter for great regret that so few of his own letters survive. Some of his most intimate correspondents, such as William Sellar, A. W. Ward, and A. C. Swinburne, destroyed all they received, while his letters to the late

Master of Balliol—and there were hundreds of them—were sent to the funeral pyre, with the rest of his correspondence, after Jowett's death. In most of the cases in which letters to myself are printed, I have not thought it necessary to indicate to whom they were addressed. Nichol was a brilliant letter-writer, and many of his briefest notes contained more than allusion to matters of passing interest.

It was my original intention to combine in this volume a sketch of the career of Nichol's father—John Pringle Nichol—the distinguished Professor of Astronomy in the University of Glasgow, devoting two chapters to him; one to his Life, and another to his Correspondence. This plan, however, has been abandoned, on the advice of the family. They regret, as much as anyone can, that no life of the Glasgow Professor of Astronomy has been written, but they think that it would be inexpedient to combine a sketch of both men in a volume specially devoted to the son. A brief notice of the father may, however, be included in this introduction.

He was a native of Forfarshire, and was originally destined for the Church. After receiving at Brechin the customary education of the Grammar Schools of Scotland, he went to King's College, Aberdeen, where he distinguished himself in Mathematics and Physics. After his Arts curriculum ended, there followed the Divinity Hall lectures, and his 'license' as a preacher; but, although he appeared several times in a Scottish pulpit, he soon discovered that his true vocation was educational work.

He became successively headmaster at Hawick, Cupar, and Montrose. While in Montrose Academy he began a correspondence with John Stuart Mill which lasted till Mill's death. The elder Mill (Historian of India) and Naussau Senior recommended him to the Chair of Political Economy in the Collège de France, long held by M. Say. To this he was not elected; but shortly afterwards he was nominated by the Crown as Regius Professor of Astronomy in the University of Glasgow. At the Observatory, in the west of the city, he carried on his astronomical observations, and gave free lectures to all students interested in his subject.

The old house at the Observatory became the chosen rendezvous of many an ardent youth, whom he helped in other directions as well as in science. His career was remarkable, and his power as a lecturer of rare brilliance and simplicity was universally acknowledged. In the series of letters in this volume, entitled "Leaves from my Life"—in which the son gives an account of his own early years—we have a more vivid picture of the father than could be given by any one else. It is obvious that the Professor of Astronomy had a most powerful influence over his son; and that this influence extended far beyond the household.

The writer of a brief sketch of him in *Memoirs and Portraits of One Hundred Glasgow Men* (1886) says: "There are many who still remember the crowded hall in which they first 'learned his great language, caught his clear accents,' as the scene of their entrance into a world of thought of the very existence of which they had been ignorant. He combined, as few have done, the exactness and precision of a man of science with the power of an accomplished orator. Hence his lectures were works of art, calculated at once to exercise and enlighten the intellect, quicken the imagination, and move the heart. . . . As the lecture proceeded, with alternations of lucid exposition and stirring appeal, it was evident that the seeming ease and calm of the speaker were but the covering of suppressed excitement of a finely-strung organism, of an enthusiasm of science and humanity openly displayed in the thrilling perorations, the most striking of which might be compared with the eloquence of such masters of English prose as De Quincey or Ruskin. That the lecturer's magnetic influence was not wholly due to the grandeur of his theme, was manifested by the fact that when he spoke rather of minute processes than general results the attention was as close and the interest almost as keen as when he led his listeners into realms of illimitable space. Since the day when Chalmers delivered his sermons in the Tron Church no public speaker north of the Tweed had so enchained his hearers. One who was himself a most accomplished lecturer was wont to say that all that the people of Scotland knew of astronomy

they had learnt from Thomas Chalmers and John Pringle Nichol."

He had a large circle of friends and correspondents, among whom were John Stuart Mill, George Combe, Herschel, Sir G. B. Airy, James Nasmyth, Samuel Brown, Longfellow, Wordsworth, Lloyd Garrison, Sumner, and De Quincey. Unfortunately Professor Nichol's letters to these friends have not been preserved, except two to the last named, which have already been published in the *Memorials of De Quincey.*

In a correspondence, which lasted from 1833 till Nichol's death, he and Mill discussed questions in Philosophy and Economy, which were further developed in Mill's published works. In these letters he also entered fully into the literary and political interests of his time. It is hoped that they may yet be published, but they do not find their natural place in a volume dealing with the life of his son.

The estimates of Nichol the younger which were formed by his numerous friends will come out in the pages which follow. He is happily characterized, in many a letter and memorial-notice. Of his attainments as a literary man, and his achievements as a writer of books, there is abundant evidence. He was a scholar, a poet, a critic, and a philosopher; and the wide area over which his efforts ranged is perhaps an explanation both of their rare merit, and their necessary limitations.

I assign him a high place amongst the poets of his day; and I do not think that his lyrics and sonnets have met with due recognition. There are also unpublished poems which reach, *me judice*, quite as high, if not a higher, level than anything he gave to the world; but, in deference to the opinions and wishes of those with whom the decision rested, only a few of them are printed in this *Memoir.*

What comes out so strongly in connection with his Poems, his familiar Letters, and the Journal now published, is the light they cast on *the character of the man*, in relation to his family, his parents, his wife, and his children.

It is a familiar fact that many a valiant fighter in the literary arena—whose blood is shed in those controversial feuds, which everyone may witness—is the most gentle of men within the precincts of the domestic circle; but how this came out in Nichol's poems, letters, and journal will be a revelation to those who read them.

The combination of the poet and the critic was as striking in him, as it was in Matthew Arnold, and Russell Lowell; or, as it now is, in Mr. Swinburne. I think, however, that he was greater as a critic, than as a poet. His Glasgow and his Oxford training, in classical Literature and in Philosophy, perhaps confirmed the original bent of his nature in the former direction. Many of his friends agreed in assigning him a place as an *oral* critic (*i.e.* in conversational discussion even more than in his writings) above that of the majority of his contemporaries. The late Professor William Sellar said to me, over and over again, that he knew no man with whose critical opinions—whether expressed in writing, or in conversation—he was more in sympathy. Another of his friends, the late Mr. George Wilson of Dalmarnock—with whom, in his estimate of Burns, he had much in common—said the same thing. Many of Mr. Sellar's letters to Nichol are remarkable, and would have formed an important item in the memorial sketch which Nichol once thought of writing of his friend, as a man of letters and as Professor of Latin in the University of Edinburgh.

After reading an anonymous review of his book on the Roman Poets which had been written by Nichol—unknown to the author—Professor Sellar wrote: "The review is much the best of anything I have read. The *résumé* of the early writers is exactly what I think of them; but it is put in a much more nervous and hitting-the-nail-on-the-head style than I could have put it."

In all his criticism he was forcible, often brilliant, and almost invariably just. Although full of personal prejudices, he put these aside, when he sat down to the serious work of criticism: and this quality of *justice* is the most important of all to a reviewer.

He had a marvellously rapid insight into both the strong

and the weak points of anything he read, whether in prose or verse; and the merits of any book he undertook to review were sure to be signalized as fairly as its defects were pointed out. As Dr. Grindrod happily puts it, with respect to books written by personal friends he adopted the wise rule of letting them alone if he could not praise them. "He was too honest a critic to praise, and too good a friend to damn a bad book; but, to those who had faith in his judgment, his praise was as good a warrant of success, as his blame was of failure. It is the very opposite with many critics."

In a letter received in 1889, after referring to "the Mutual Admiration Society's pet author of six lbs. weight of well-written commonplace," he adds, "At worst for both of us 'there remaineth a rest.' Let —— be on the throne of criticism, and Midas prefer Pan-Demos to the Muse, or tuft-hunters make her groves into caves of refuge for popular mediocrity, we can still walk the Links and ascend the Hills. . . . Ere this is over I shall be driven to make a Bible of Gulliver's Fourth Voyage. . . . You must revisit our glimpses at more leisure, ere we finally follow the swallows."

The following, written two years earlier, discloses something of his own literary work. "I don't expect to share your own opinion of your Biography. My experience is generally misery in the first writing of a book that has to deal with facts, it is like paving; and something like enjoyment in rewriting, which is like polishing the stones."

He often said that he could not possibly carry on two or more kinds of literary work simultaneously. He had to devote himself, with single-minded and single-hearted concentration, to one work at a time: and this doubtless accounts for the success of his monographs.

In addition to his critical insight I think that John Nichol was one of the very best prose-writers of his day. Putting aside the validity of his judgments, and looking on his Essays in Criticism merely as contributions to literary Art, it would be difficult for any one to excel their best passages, and still more difficult to match his more sustained efforts

as a whole. From an artistic point of view, his youthful autobiography is most admirable work.

Many of his *obiter dicta*, as expressed in his familiar letters to his friends, are delightful, even when these friends disagreed with them from root to branch. Of Wordsworth he wrote to me: "I consider him to be, *at his best*, the greatest English poet of this century; *at his worst*, one of the most uninteresting pipes through which the Empyrean has chosen to blow its messages to earth."

One reason why many letters, and fragments of letters, from Nichol's friends and correspondents are published in this *Memoir*, is that so many of his own letters, even the most interesting and original ones, have been destroyed. Another reason is, that the letters which were addressed to him are a very significant mirror of what he himself was, and they disclose the width of his sympathies as well as the range of his literary acquaintanceships. It may not be inappropriate to give a list of some of his correspondents, so large and varied was the circle into which he entered, and with which he became intimate. They included John S. Mill, Frederick D. Maurice, William L. Garrison, Sydney Dobell, Alexander Smith, Henry W. Longfellow, A. C. Swinburne, Theodore Watts, J. R. Green, Thomas Hill Green, G. R. Luke, Edward Lushington, Louis Kossuth, William B. Scott, Dante and William Rossetti, James Martineau, Goldwin Smith, William Sellar, B. Jowett, Edward Caird, D. L. Newman, Dr. John Brown, Henry T. Smith, Lionel A. Tollemache, Thomas Arnold, P. G. Hamerton, John Skelton, Moncure Conway, Benjamin J. Williams, A. W. Ward, James Bryce, A. V. Dicey, J. Hutcheson Stirling, J. M. Ross, W. Pulsford, Henry Crosskey, Frances Power Cobbe, Mrs. Lynn Linton, William Sharp, H. D. Rawnsley, Birkbeck Hill, Æneas Mackay, John Morley, George Gilfillan, John W. Hales, Alexander Ireland, John Tyndall, Lord Houghton, Lord Lytton, R. Buchanan, and a score of others. As many as sixty-three letters of the late Master of Balliol to him exist. Some of them, the most important ones, will be published in the forthcoming Life of the Master. Some others are published, in whole or in part, in this *Memoir*.

The letters of friends and correspondents which have been preserved—all of which I have examined with care—disclose much of Nichol's personality. This applies especially to those of Dr. John Brown (the author of *Rab and his Friends*), Alexander Smith, William B. Scott, the late Master of Balliol, and Lord Lytton.

These letters give a very vivid portraiture, not only of the man to whom they were addressed, but also of their writers; and this is, to a certain extent, a compensation for the loss of his own letters. I should add that, in the case of many letters, the want of date, especially where the post office imprint is undecipherable on the envelope, makes it extremely difficult to assign them to their proper place. When will literary people learn that "Thursday" is an insufficient date to their letters! or that the "25th" is quite misleading, without a clue to the month and year!

It is only right that I should say that there are many letters to him from friends, both dead and living, not one tithe of which can be utilized in this *Memoir*, but which are intrinsically very remarkable. Several of those from Professor William Sellar are not only weighted with acute criticism, but sparkle with literary grace. It is a matter of deep regret that those from the late Professor Lushington cannot be printed in full in this volume. They are so interesting a reflection of the character of a remarkable Scottish University Professor.

I may here add that in the career of a distinguished man, even the testimonials written in his behalf when a candidate for important posts, have at times a literary value: and that many more addressed to Nichol than those published in this book are an index to the character both of the writer and the recipient.

The courtesy of the literary executors of the late Master of Balliol, in allowing the letters bearing specially on Nichol to be printed in this volume, must be specially acknowledged. Mr. Evelyn Abbot has been very kind in this matter. I had all the letters of his Master to Nichol transcribed. Mr. Abbot went over them, and made a selection of those which should appear in the memoirs of

Jowett, and those which might be utilized in this book. The same remark applies to the action of the Dowager Lady Lytton, and her daughter Lady Betty Balfour, in connection with the publication of the late Lord Lytton's letters to Nichol.

Personally I regret, as much as Mr. Ward does, that Nichol's class-lectures—leading up to an extended History of English Literature—have not seen, and cannot now see, the light of day; but I cordially assent to the decision of my co-trustees that they should not be published. I regard their judgment—as teachers of the subject—as final. Doubtless the progress of critical work, devoted to special sections of our English Literature, rapidly superannuates the very best discussions of the class-room—as every teacher knows. Besides, much of the best part of Nichol's lectures to his students was utilized by him afterwards in his literary work—in his *Burns*, his *Bacon*, his *Byron*, his *Carlyle*, and in the articles on the Scottish Poets which he contributed to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. In addition to this, much of his success as a lecturer was due to the electric force, the *vis vivida*, of his own personality, and to the glamour of his reading and recitation; while a great deal that he said in his class—as is the case with every professor of original mind and faculty—was the inspiration of the hour or the moment, and perished with it.

Principal Ward writes of this:

"Many of us had hoped that Nichol would live to arrange the substance of his University lectures—the work of many years of labour—into an organically constructed history of our National Literature. There was room for such work, even though, to adopt the words of Mr. Jusseraud in the preface to his own welcome addition to the list, 'Many other histories of English Literature might have preceded it, and many more were soon to follow it.' But the truth, I suppose, is, that in conception, if not always in execution, a *magnum opus*—at whatever epoch of an author's or an artist's life it may actually be begun and carried out—is really the companion of his career, not the consolation of its close. Nichol had some lesser tasks to

finish before he could turn to the larger work which we thought he could still accomplish. Had he survived to write a History of English Literature, a philosophic basis would after all have been more likely to be chosen by him than a historical one. . . . I am glad to think that a literary memorial of his work will not be wanting; but, in no case, would there be any fear of his name being forgotten in either of the Universities which he adorned, or overlooked in the annals of a Literature, into the very heart of which his own spirit entered."

When all is said, I believe that Nichol's contribution to the literary criticism of the nineteenth century will rank as high as that of any of his co-mates. I cannot compare him with living contemporaries; but, beside those already named—Arnold and Lowell, to mention only two of the illustrious dead—he holds a position that is distinctively his own. He may shed less of the pure white light of dispassionate criticism, on the problems and the men he deals with, than others who are seated in the inner circle; but, the fiery radiance and many-sided colour which he threw into almost all his work, never dazzles his reader, but always interests and instructs him.

As a college tutor in Classics and Philosophy, his reputation and success at Oxford was greater than that of any other 'coach.' All the best men of his time read with him, or tried to do so; and their subsequent successes in "the schools" abundantly justified their choice of preceptor.

In this connection I may also put on record how, towards the close of his career—his old interest in the work of the successful 'coach' surviving—he offered, in the most generous way, to become the voluntary tutor (for a few summer months) of the son of one of his friends, who was going up to compete for an entrance scholarship at Oxford.

Nichol inherited, and further developed, the Carlyleian hatred of shams. 'Unrealities' and 'unveracities' of all sorts were abhorrent to him; but this constitutional anger, directed against everything unreal, was tempered—as all

were aware who knew him well—by the most thorough sympathy with all goodness, and a rare appreciation of excellence, when it appeared in unwonted forms. "A powerful hater, yet the staunchest friend," aptly described him from his boyhood to the close. A contribution to an estimate of his character will be found in these pages, from a *political* antagonist at College, whom he fought with all the ardour of a perfervid Scot—viz. Dr. Donald Macleod—yet, after leaving the University, in December, 1889, he wrote from Rothesay: "Nor can I omit to acknowledge the chivalrous companionship of one of my old co-mates by the Molendinar, whilom firm, but ever genial antagonist, later editor, ally, and friend—Dr. Donald Macleod."

It may not be an insignificant item in a volume such as this, that it gives an opportunity for the publication of letters from literary men, which might never otherwise see the light: their "lives" having been either already written, or not ever likely to be so.

It also incidentally discloses some things as to University life, both at Glasgow and Oxford, its nature and conditions, its relative advantages and disadvantages, which may be instructive to the present generation.

It is interesting to see how, after a time—notwithstanding his brilliant success as a tutor—Oxford did not satisfy him; how, in later years, when the drawbacks of academic life in Scotland pressed upon him, he wished to return to Oxford, as a Fellow in one of the Colleges; and how, finally, he longed for the great Metropolis, with its absolute freedom from all conventional ties, and wrote: "I have come here *ten years too late.*"

It will be seen from what follows that Nichol did much beyond the academic groove to which his special and more important work was confined. He shed lustre on his University, by his manifold literary labours; but his academic success in Glasgow was enhanced by what he undertook, and achieved, beyond the College precincts. He was, *e.g.*, the real pioneer of that University-Extension-Lecture-System in Scotland; a scheme which has done so much for our large urban centres, and indirectly for the

Scottish Universities themselves. It has been greatly matured and developed, throughout the kingdom, since Nichol started it; but there are hundreds who look back to his extra-academical lectures—from Alderley Edge to Cheltenham, and from Dundee to Penzance—as their first initiation into the wide realm of English literary culture.

This memorial of my friend cannot be a continuous eulogy: and to show the errors of misconstruction into which he fell—as to the actions rather than the character, of others—many instances might be quoted. It is a curious thing that literary men are more prone, than politicians or lawyers are, to misconstrue the most innocent actions of their acquaintances and friends; and so, a chance remark, or unintentional act, becomes

> The little rift within the lute,
> That by and by may make the music mute.

For example, Nichol entirely misconstrued the character and actions of a colleague, one of the best and ablest of men, who happened to succeed where he failed; and in many of his letters there comes out the strong satiric sting of unforgetable loss, and its consequences to himself. Nevertheless, in later days, and long before that colleague had passed

> To where beyond these voices there is peace,

Nichol became just, in his appreciation of the man, and of his many-sided work.

Some of Nichol's most intimate friends believe that he has written nothing which is an adequate mirror of the man himself, his large, vivid, and many-sided personality; and that neither his two volumes of poetry, nor his philosophical and critical works, give any indication of the riches of his nature. This is doubtful, but he often said to others that the life of a man of action would have been as congenial to him as that of a *litterateur*. I do not believe that he could ever have succeeded as a politician. While he possessed the insight and energy, he lacked the calmness, reserve and indifference to criticism, which are so essential to political success. The intense life he led, with a physical frame

not strong, would have prevented him from ever being a success at the Bar, or in the House of Commons. I well remember how, even as a mountaineer, he failed, from causes purely physical. He would have been a greater failure in Parliament, had he entered it, than John S. Mill was, or than any other literary man has ever been.

It is curious to find that, as in the case of many other men, Nichol's enduring fame will rest, not on what he most desired, but on his work as a University Professor and Lecturer, and as a critic of Books. In the class-room his Oxford training in Classics and Philosophy led him to deal with English Literature at its foundations, *i.e.* in relation to those other aspects of national life and development which a well-educated scholar knows. One who has been a brilliant philosophical coach could not fail to make his lectures on English Literature philosophical from first to last. They were *grounded* in Philosophy, and yet were wholly detached from its bias, and never were influenced by its technicalities. Calmness, vividness, directness, breadth, and candour were features which characterized all he did from his chair; and while seeking to inform his students with the best results of the literary history of England, his ulterior aim was to make them wise men, to educate their characters by bringing them into contact with "the true, the beautiful, and the good," in Literature.

His numerous students must feel that he taught them many things besides the canons of criticism. I cannot believe that any ingenuous spirit could fail to read beneath the literary presentation of fact or theory, and to imbibe all unconsciously by means of it, the deeper lessons of thoroughness, of tolerance, of charity, of courtesy, of honesty, and true humility. I think that his moral qualities of head and heart were greater than his intellectual insight, or his learning. His gift of style was perhaps supreme amongst his intellectual attainments. Mentally he was very agile, too active at times, because his rapid insight induced him to misconstrue what the sober judgment of the future led him to appraise more accurately. In conversation he was often too impulsive. This was probably due to the early, even precocious, development of his mind. In youth he awoke to

a realization that he was "not on the roll of common men," and, although that never induced conceit, or developed selfishness, it led him at times into an eager *pronouncement* of himself, of his views, etc., which interfered with the repose of his own nature, and with judicial calm in his appreciation of other men.

I have received many testimonies to Nichol from his friends and acquaintances, too numerous to quote. The following is from Mr. Swinburne.

THE PINES, PUTNEY HILL, S.W.,
October 28, 1894.

My dear Sir,—I have no letters of my late and very dear old friend, Mr. Nichol, which I could supply for the purpose of publication or selection. As to my estimate of his character and powers, I need not tell one who knew him as well as I did, that I never met, or can meet, a more loyal and constant and altogether manlier man. He was the trustiest of friends, as we know, and I am certain that none but the meanest of mankind would deny that he was the fairest of fighters, and the most gallant of antagonists.

I have more than once before now done what justice I could to the author of *Hannibal* and the critical biographer of *Byron*. Of his work on *Bacon* I do not presume to speak; of his work on *Burns* I need not—there can be but one opinion of its excellence among Englishmen as (I should suppose) among Scotchmen.—Yours very truly,

A. C. SWINBURNE.

Looking back through the vista of many years to the ending of a life, which left the world barer and poorer for many, the quality which perhaps most distinguished Nichol from other men was his supreme *loyalty*. I agree with Dr. Mackennal, who says: "He was loyal to his ideals and his obligations, loyal to Truth, loyal to his friends, and he was so always and unmistakably. He was full of prejudices and vehemencies, and these he wore not 'lightly as a flower,' but as badge and blazonry, which called on you to rank yourself alongside of him, or to attack him. But

underneath the excesses which were so patent was a deep and reverent candour."

It is much for those of us who still survive to have this great memory of loyal steadfastness, of disinterested service, and of courage in the life-long battle for what our friend believed to be the cause of the right and the true. To my mind none of our contemporaries has striven, more consistently or courageously, after a unification—both in theory and in practice—of the promises of the True, the Beautiful, and the Good.

Let others hail the rising sun,
I bow to those whose course is run.

W. K.

June, 1896.

MEMOIR OF JOHN NICHOL.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS, 1833–1851.

"*LEAVES FROM MY LIFE.*"

[THE following pages, entitled "Leaves from my Life," were written by John Nichol in the form of letters to his wife shortly after their marriage. They were not, as he himself states, composed with a view to publication, but they contain material too valuable to be neglected, revealing as they do—what in almost all cases is most acceptable—the youthful environment, and the influences which shaped the character, of a distinguished man. Nor, after careful revision and considerable curtailment, do they contain anything to the publication of which their writer would have objected.

In reading these pages, where—as not unfrequently happens—past events and persons are referred to in the present tense, it should be remembered that they were written in 1861.]

BIARRITZ, May 10th, 1861.

My Dearest Wife,

I used to wile away the hours of last summer and winter by writing to you, and my delight was in your answers. Now we are together you know all I am doing, a great part of what I am thinking, and the need for those letters is over. The future—that bright future which we were always talking and writing about—has realized itself, what more is there to say? Yet I liked to send, and you say you liked to receive, my messages; why, after all, should they cease? I have thought of something to write

about still which will interest you, if it is a dull theme to others, and may serve to entertain us both during some of those long evenings. We used to look forward; suppose we agree for a while to look back together, while I lay before you a few pages of my own past life. I like autobiographies, yet I am not going to write one, because he only has a right to obtrude his career on the world who has lived so as to make it memorable. There are a thousand curious lives that mankind have no time nor care to inquire into; for you alone I gather together the scattered leaves which are tossing about with fragments of my little history: the world might be very willing to lose them all, but there are some you would like to be preserved. I call them leaves by no figure of speech, but by their proper name. A sheet of jottings here, an old letter there, notes of an excursion, a diary kept for a month or two and broken with the resolutions it records, with "lights and shades" of memory, are the materials with which I have to work. My aim is to piece them into a motley whole, needing a finer pencil and subtler touch than mine to bring its many colours into harmony.

I have no intention to make a consistent narrative; you must be ready to follow me, as you read, through many digressions; the wind will blow where it listeth, and my fancy must be free to lead me "through winding mossy ways." Yet I must remember that even the *Story without an end* has a beginning. Where then shall I begin?

> "O strengthen me, enlighten me,
> Thou dewy dawn of memory!"

I have always had, have still, and will I believe continue to have, an incorrigible difficulty in beginning anything. To commence, whether a journey or a letter, a new language or a speech, has always tried me to the utmost; once get me fairly begun, and the battle is half won; then I will walk, or write, or read, or speak fast enough. Now my trouble is in beginning to remember, or at least to tell you what I remember; and in my perplexity I am in danger of running into another *excursus* on beginnings. Some men begin regularly with quotations—an odious practice of

which I stand convicted at the head of this page; it is like diving with a bathing gown on, as they do here—others by distant allusions; these would fain quote, but have not the courage. Thackeray opens the *Newcomes* by a fable; the Saturday Reviewers lead off their smart leaders with a smart sentence, as acid and shallow as the rest. I will try a comparison, and liken myself unto an engine—the steam is gathering, the rusty wheels are creaking, the piston moves, and away we are on our travels to find the old world again.

Ovid begins his recollections of himself by telling us, in some very pretty lines which I cannot recall, about his own first verses, for with them he supposes our interest in him is likely to begin. Modern German poets, who all write autobiographies, are more communicative. Longfellow remarks, and when I think of it his remark seems justified, that they all begin by giving us an account of their grandfathers.

I remember nothing about either of my grandfathers. I have heard a good deal of both, and I have never heard a word said against either of them. I know that my mother's father changed his name from Tullus to Tullis, whether before or after he married Agnes Smith I cannot tell, but I have always held the fact as decisive of my descent from one of the Roman kings, whether *Tullus* Hostilius or Servius *Tullius* I leave it for antiquarians to determine! They had eight children, of whom the third (Jane) was my mother.

My grandfather Nichol was an Englishman. He had held some land in Northumberland before he came to settle in Forfarshire and marry Miss Jane Forbes. He seems to have been one of those men who are venerated by all who know them, remarkable for a rare combination of strength of character and gentleness. He was, I have heard it said, as tender as a lamb, and as firm as a rock. From him my own father used to confess that he had inherited all the good he had. My uncle can never forget one day when his father laid his hand on the boy's head, and soothed away all his wrath. His "Well, well, it is no matter in the end," quelled many a domestic storm. The neighbours came to him to adjust their quarrels, and his legislation on such occasions was always sufficient. A

word or a look of his was generally enough to ensure obedience. His wife, of more fiery temper and perhaps keener intellect, for she was one of the cleverest of women, was no match for the quiet authority of his eye. All I have learnt makes me proud that this John Nichol was my grandfather, for I believe him to have been one of the unobtrusive great men of the world.

He had seven children, of whom the eldest was my father. I am not writing his life now. It is not needful in these memorials of myself that I should tell how his mind was first developed, how and when his peculiar talents were first manifested. The genius of the school at Brechin, he went, at an early age, to inaugurate his career as a teacher in the capacity of schoolmaster of Dun. From thence he was sent to the University of Aberdeen. His geniality, love of companionship, and a certain want of patient resolution which attended him through life, led him to pass a large portion of each session in what is perhaps improperly called idleness. Those rambles on the hills, those long days of boating on the Don, may have added some years to his brief life; and when the time came when the tree had to be shown by its fruits his offering was always the richest. I have heard that at college he got every prize that he ever tried for. He brought away with him the fame of the best mathematician who had been known there for many a year. Had he gone to Cambridge, a first wranglership and all the rest would have doubtless awaited him, but I know not whether I ought to regret that he went instead to be head-master of Hawick Grammar School.

There are people still at Hawick who can tell stories of the thin handsome youth who astonished every one by his brilliancy, and interested all the ladies by his weak health and poetic fancies. Exactly when or how he left the Borders I cannot tell. I know of him next still prosecuting his studies for the Church of Scotland, yet accepting the position of editor of the *Fife Herald*, the property of Mr. Tullis of Auchmuty.

Let us return, and take a view of this other family whom we previously dismissed with an enumeration. There

was my grandfather, who, along with his brother, my granduncle, still surviving in Edinburgh, the sole remnant of his generation, had his two paper mills near Markinch, and lived in the old house at Auchmuty, superintending them. George, the eldest son, was settled in Cupar, managing the newspaper and overseeing the warehouse. The other two sons, William and Robert, were just leaving the University of St. Andrews. The former has carried out his destiny of succeeding to the Mills; the latter was the genius of the family, and having carried off all the prizes of his time, was thinking, I believe, of entering the medical profession.

Great hopes were formed of him, never to be fulfilled. A rapid fever cut short this high promise, and he is only a faint image among my earliest recollections, a spare-built, dark young man, with a face which reminds me of the portraits one sees of Robert Burns, playing, to my delight, on a great violoncello which he was much in love with. My father had some difficulty, I believe, in keeping on good terms with George Tullis, who was apt to be overbearing and surly, but he made friends with the other boys. William was sharpening his maiden pen over radical pamphlets, and my father was horrifying the landed interest of Fife by revolutionary articles in the *Herald*; while Robert and he talked, walked, and speculated together on the poetry of science. He made friends, too, with all the girls, pretty little Christina, and beautiful Alice, and tall Jane. The two latter were leaving, the first was just entering, school; but she was over now and then on holidays to see them all, and to be fascinated like the rest by the talk and the grace of the young editor. How strange it would be to follow the threads of the history of those three girls! Christina going for her last year at school, and bidding good-bye to her brother William, and meeting another William, and falling in love at first sight, and being engaged a few months after, and being married. How well I remember that marriage! Alice falling in love too, and fancying her love returned, and finding a rival in her own sister; then her marriage, and the end of *that*—how strange!

My father liked them all, but it was Jane he loved, and after a year or two it was Jane he married; and I know they lived together very happily during those two years and a half that passed before I knew anything about them. He was Rector of the Academy of Montrose. When dining out one afternoon in some friend's house by the shore, the news came to him that he must hasten home and see this baby who had just stepped upon the stage. That was the 8th of September, 1833, my dear, a great many years ago, and here my first letter ends.

BIARRITZ, May 14th.

My experience inclines me to indulge the fancy that the scenery of our earliest years leaves an impression on the mind which, however vague, is indelible, as the colour the flower takes from the soil on which it grows. What is it that has put that sound of waves into the sea-shell? Perhaps "it remembers its august abodes, and murmurs as the ocean murmurs there." I am never brought into presence of the sea or the mountains, without feeling how truly Wordsworth has named them the two great voices of liberty: without a thrill of exultation, as if I were brought back to an earlier and a grander world. All things else pass, but these are the same: the waves roll round their shores with the same eternal surge, and the hills rise up to greet the stars by night, and the sun by day, with the same majestic calm. Perhaps I feel this more because I was born by the shore of the sea, and reared under the shadow of the Grampians; yet I cannot, from my earliest recollections, recall any features of Montrose. Those three first years have passed and left no sign, unless it be a faint image of the brain, half like a dream, of my nurse dancing before me while I sat, a baby on a chair. I have a vague impression of Barnachom Cottage, where J. P. Nichol and his wife and their little one spent the summer of 1836. My father had again fallen into bad health, and had to resign his position as Rector in Montrose. Old people whom I saw there last winter told me stories of him, and how few expected his

life would last, he looked so thin and worn. The same illness, and circumstances connected with it, brought about a change in his religious views; his mind was turned away from the Church of Scotland,—after he had been for some years a licentiate and preached several sermons,—and became more and more exclusively directed into the paths of Literature and Science. In the spring of 1837 my father delivered a course of lectures on Astronomy, before the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh, which combined with his mathematical reputation, the fame of some articles written in *Tait's Magazine*, the vigour of his political articles, and his influence with some of the leading politicians of the time, to gain for him the appointment to the chair of Astronomy in Glasgow.

It may have been during this visit to Edinburgh, but it was probably later, that my father and my uncle in some freak resolved to take me, almost an infant, to the theatre. What an extraordinary revelation it was to me of a wonderful bright world, of which I was for the time permitted to be a spectator! All behind the curtain was to me then much more real than that other drama, which goes on before it, appears to me now. Great ladies and knights, and trumpets and music, and the paste and tinsel all seemed to me so *real*. It was a dangerous experiment, and nearly ended in disturbing the equanimity of the more enlightened spectators; for as we had taken a box we were in a conspicuous position, and my feelings, which were keen enough then, and vigorous in their expression, proved too much for my decorum. At the most exciting parts of the play—it was *Ivanhoe*—I burst into ejaculations only half suppressed; and when the Templar, my horror, was proceeding in the course of nature to beat the old Jew, I stretched out my fist and cried, "You villain." I was only with difficulty quieted by the assurance that it would all come right.

I have just a few disconnected recollections of our house at Glasgow, in the old College Court, during the first six months. It stood next to Blackburn's, near the entrance. I took possession of the large nursery at the top of the house, and arranged my toys in it, and prepared to rule

with undivided sway over my little kingdom. The rooms below were only open to me now and then, and I walked through them with a more modest step. My father's study and my mother's room—the red room—were specially sacred. Well I recollect one afternoon stealing into the latter, and looking in amazement at her watch, standing in its case on the table with the mirror in it. If I could get into that old house, all covered over with cobwebs though it is likely to be, I could lay my hand on the very corner where my father used to be sitting in his round study chair, when I was called to account for misconduct and sentenced to an hour's imprisonment. Ah, what tears were shed on those occasions!

I had not seen my mother for some days, and there was a mysterious silence in the house soon after we were established in it. One evening, when I was lying in bed, my father came to me and whispered—I can remember it as it were yesterday—"John, you've got a little sister." I have had few things to say about the previous years, but it seems in my dim recollection as if I had lived a whole forgotten life previous to that event. I did not appreciate its full import, but in the morning I was led in to get a peep of the starry stranger, who was destined to exert so great an influence on my future. She lay smiling in her tiny cradle—as I said when asked about her—"just like a little pea." I saw her, and my mother, only to bid good-bye. Good Dr. Samuel Clarke had pronounced that, owing to some childish ailment I had at the time, my remaining in the house might be fatal to the child, and I was hurried away in the coach to Edinburgh to spend a month there with my Aunt Jane and her mother. They lived in a house at Lauriston, and I have a vivid impression of the walks I used to have with aunt about the meadows and along by the rows—then more green and open than now—between Heriot's and Donaldson's Hospital. I remember my grandmother Nichol sitting stiff and stately on her arm-chair, a grand-looking old lady, in spite of the paralysis which kept her fastened there, just like the picture Hutchison painted with a skill he afterwards lost, but subject to fits of violent ill-temper

which made poor Jane unhappy, and set me a bad example. My great playmate was my uncle William; he must have been about twenty-five, full of life and promise. My delight was to stand on his shoulders while he marched with me round the room, springing and singing as was his fashion with his own children afterwards; or, better still, to throw the pillows about, an initiation into the theory of projectiles, which proved to have been premature, and became rather dangerous in course of time.

I must have enjoyed this visit, yet I grew home-sick ere its close. I rejoiced when the term of my banishment drew near, for the cords that bound me to the guardian angel of my early life were already drawn fast and strong.

> "Great was the longing that I had
> To see my mother."

Nothing of the journey home comes back to me except the end of it, and that is fixed in my heart forever. I had been among friends, but it was a strange land, where she was not towards whom the tide of my love was set. I see it yet—the Beatific Vision of that Return—the first coming home from wandering. There she was standing clothed in light, waiting for me in the porch. I would give most things to live that moment over again. My emotion was manifested in a way then common with me. I was asked a thousand questions, and got a thousand kisses; but I only took her hand in silence, and wept for joy.

There is a mist in my mind over the year that must have followed this return, as if that ray of heavenly light had left the space dark around it. I cannot recall my second introduction to the little sister, nor anything but the vaguest impression of a trip to London that we had about this time, and that is a sort of dream of the Zoological Gardens, and another phantom of St. Paul's, and a memory of disappointment because my mother and Aunt Alice would not allow me to ascend the dome.

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plunged into reading with a rapidity which astonished everybody. I could hardly ever be brought to spell, but now I would read all day. Pictures first lured me on, and then I made out the sense, my mother reading aloud the hard words and passages now and then. The first book which made a distinct impression on my mind was read aloud to me during an illness. Some people say they don't like the *Pilgrim's Progress*; it took me captive at once and for ever. I longed for the hour of the day when I should have my chapters read to me; I begged for a few more when the reader was weary; I cried when the book was done, and went on imagining new and ever new adventures for Christian and Christiana and my favourite, Faithful. "You won't be like Hopeful, I'm afraid," said my mother.

Another source of delight was opened for me by a present of Grimm's *Mährchen* in English. My imaginations of the Celestial City were henceforth incongruously blended with fantasies of faery land. I read book after book about the dwarfs and trolls and spirits of the air; I believed in them as firmly and with as little idea of allegory as I believed in Bunyan. There was a Celestial City which I thought I might see one day, and there was a faery land. Faeries were around me, if I could only have eyes to see them. I won't undertake to deny that I believe in them still. If I was missing in those days, I was pretty sure to be found in a corner reading a faery tale—and I would cry when I was told to leave it and come to dinner—or in the nursery teaching Nan with her dolls to play at Greatheart and Mercy, or building great brick houses for the king of the faeries to come and live in. Those dolls were an endless source of delight to me; first, when they came they had to be born, and we would play at the baby being born; then it had to be baptized; then wedded; then it had a long and happy life to lead, and when its good days were done it had to be respectably buried, not in the foolish modern way, but like the great ladies and gentlemen of long ago. I had seen in Flaxman's illustrations to Homer the designs of the funerals of Patroclus and of Hector: that was the way our dolls must have their rites performed. So I built a little funeral pile of old bricks,

and covered it with a black cloth, and laid the old dolls, one or two or more, solemnly on the top of it, and set fire to it all, and set other new dolls round to join in the lamentation, and watch the wax running down as they blazed away.

When I was sent to school, as I was in 1839, it did not interfere with all this: my tasks and my amusement went on together. My first teacher was a pretty good one, though three parts humbug. He taught us from the *Moral Class Book* and the *Rudiments of Science*, pretending to more science than he knew. He used to ask the boys absurdly difficult questions, and tell them to go home for the answers. I remember one: "Why is the rainbow only an arch when it is the reflection of the sun?" My father was of course the only one of the parents who could solve the problem, and I was supplied with a demonstration, which I could not understand. As to my progress generally, I believe it was satisfactory. I only remember that we were ranged in benches, and that I was generally at the top of the bench on five days in the week, but always got to the bottom on Mondays, when we had to learn paraphrases off by heart. There are people to be found who say that memory is an affair of practice and education; it is one part dependent on practice and education, nine parts on birth: the one part is about the extent to which any of our faculties are in our hands. My memory was, is, and will be miserable. I never could, I can't, and never will be able to learn things off by heart. My school-mates did not please me on the whole, but they were not more rude or insolent than school-boys generally are, and I used to enjoy one game—"Prison Bars"—because I could run faster than any one else of my age. I left school after six months' attendance to go to Germany.

We must have had visitors sometimes: there is none I remember so well as Annette Forbes, my second cousin, to whom my father wrote a poem in blank verse, thirty-five years ago, about the island of Jersey, where he went to visit her. She was a very pretty girl twenty-two years ago, when she gave me my first lesson in love; and I used to pull her long ringlets, and call it ringing the bell. On

going away she found herself tied by several ropes to the table; and when she did go away, I felt very dull. My second lesson was at Lasswade, where we went early, say in April, 1840, I and my mother with Agnes. We were to leave Nan there to be with Aunt Christina till we should come back from our projected tour abroad. It was a pleasant cottage she and uncle had taken there for the summer months. I remember my delight in the fresh country air, and the freedom of the fields after the dingy day's walk with my satchel from the College Court to John Street. There was aunt herself in her own pretty house, and William again, and little Tiny the baby, and Margaret Burton (a favourite servant of mine), the good-natured, fat cook, whom I consulted on a great occasion. It arose as follows. There was a next or near neighbour, to whose garden I used to be asked, to pull strawberries and flowers. He had a daughter, just two years older than myself, who used to gather them with me, and who made me forget all about the strawberries and flowers. If I pulled a berry it was to place it between the red lips; if I plucked a rose, it was to offer it to the fair fingers of this little girl. Well, I was in love, and she was mine for a delicious fortnight. Our stolen interviews were sweet; our stolen kisses sweeter. I dreamt about her, and thought about her incessantly. Was she only a coquette, or did she return the sincerest of passions? Suspense could be endured no longer; I must know the best or the worst. One evening when her father and herself and a party of gentlemen were supping at my uncle's, I slipped into the kitchen and confided the secrets of my heart to the cook. "Propose for her, propose for her at once," advised that disingenuous woman; "claim her hand from her father in front o' them a'." No sooner said than done. The little maiden ran away blushing; the worthy circle stared and laughed. Alas, alas! I was not to have her till I was sixteen, by which time I was sure my heart would be broken.

BIARRITZ, May 16th.

The day came when we started for Germany—my father, my mother, and myself. Nan was left alone at Lasswade, poor little thing, with melancholy eyes. "Me go too," she said, looking up entreatingly into her mother's face. We should be back in three months to bring pretty things for her to play with; meanwhile aunt would be very, very kind. We went, I think, from Edinburgh to Glasgow, and then to Liverpool, and then to London. We spent about a week there. I must not fall into reflections on London; it would be antedating the thoughts of long after years. I knew nothing of that mighty Babylon then. We lived in a little street off the Strand, leading towards the river. There was a balcony to the house; and I recollect my delight one afternoon when Punch and Judy established themselves before our window, and my father gave them a few pence, and they went through their performance manfully, a performance I still like to witness. I have stood before that box many a time. Only last autumn I wandered for hours among the marionette booths in the Champs Elysées, and found nothing finer.

I remember we paid a visit to the British Museum, which only bewildered me, and to the India House to call for J. S. Mill, whose *Logic* I think was hardly published then; he or some one else there showed us a number of curious things. Another friend of my father's—some man of science or other, I cannot guess who—gave me on this occasion a present of the electrical machine over which I have spent many an inquisitive hour. The traces that remain to me of this residence are, you see, faint and few. I have no memory of our embarkation. Light breaks upon me next at Ostend. We had landed there in a room very like ours at Dieppe, and my father said to me, with a smile, "Now, you have crossed the sea."

We went to the Continent alone—we three—but our friends, the Thomsons, had arranged to meet us on the way; they spent some considerable time with us on the Rhine, so I had better explain who they were.

Leigh Hunt has written a book called *The Old Court*

Suburb, which, as I have not read it, I shall believe to be excellent. Had I more leisure and a clearer memory, I think I could write something about the Old College Court. The dingy old place has for me some pleasant associations. When I think of those who occupied that court in the days when we first came to it, of those who are its tenants now, and how few have passed from the one list into the other, I am led to moralize after the manner of Dr. Young, or, if that seem too ambitious, like Dr. Harvey among the tombs. They came from various quarters, figured there a little while, and disappeared. When we first lived there, Hill had not begun to sound forth his platitudes from the chair, nor Fleming, good man, to pour out his ethical rhetoric, nor Jackson to discuss "great general principles," nor the most illustrious of the Thomsons to make new discoveries in electricity. Old Macfarlane was presiding over "this venerable University" and making speeches which were still intelligible.

The medical faculty has been all recast. Not one of the occupants of their chairs at that time remains. There were Meikleham and Macgill, and others mere *nominum umbrae* now. Ramsay was there, with a young wife and a little girl, Carry; she had a room full of pictures and dolls that I used to go and play in now and then. Lushington I remember coming, and there being some bustle about his marriage. From the earliest time I can recall I had the same feeling for him as I have now: from the first, he "wore that weight of learning lightly, like a flower" among pedants who wore heavily the little learning they had. Jackson's predecessor, Reid, was the successor of old Dr. M'Turk. I remember him. Old Dr. M'Turk was a bachelor of bachelors. Women and everything connected with them, marriage in particular, were his pet aversions. I believe he would rather have put his neck into any noose than that of matrimony. His dogmatism on this point was his pride and everybody else's jest. Yet he must have been good-natured, for he was persuaded not only to attend my aunt Christina's marriage, but to permit a piece of the cake to be put on his plate. Oh, horrible! that piece of cake contained the ring. The old man, as

I am told, shuddered, drew back his chair some distance from the table, looked at his plate, shuddered again, then took a fork, and holding it at arm's length, passed one of the prongs through the ring and held it to his neighbour, Mr. James Smith, saying, "There, take it." Poor old man, he did not long survive this shock, but was carried to his grave soon after the large new house, on the left hand as you enter the court, had been built for him. His successor in the tenancy of this house was Dr. James Thomson.

Niebuhr, after examining a portion of the *Fasti Consulares*, arrived at the conclusion, that the *senatus populusque Romanus* had made a compact to elect every year a member of the Fabian house to one of the highest offices of state, so thickly are the records studded with names of the Fabii. Some future Niebuhr of the New Zealand Macaulay imagines, turning his attention to the annals of Glasgow College, will undoubtedly arrive at the conclusion that the leaders of that illustrious corporation had, during the period of which I am writing, become bound in a similar manner to the name of Thomson. Members of that great *gens* literally filled one-half of the chairs in the University. I will not venture to say how many I have known. There was Tommy Thomson the chemist; William Thomson of Materia Medica; Allen Thomson of Anatomy, brother of the last; Dr. James Thomson of Mathematics; William, his son, etc., etc. Old Dr. James was one of the best of Irishmen, a good mathematician, an enthusiastic and successful teacher, the author of several valuable school books, a friend of my father's, and himself the father of a large family, the members of which have been prosperous in the world. They lived near us in the court, and we made a pretty close acquaintanceship with them all. Mrs. Thomson had died before her husband came to Glasgow; but there were two daughters, both clever, good talkers and sketchers, one of them very pretty; and four sons, in their order, James, William, John, and Robert, a pleasant and happy group, now scattered far and wide. Dr. James came originally from the North of Ireland, and

in some sense combined the qualities of the two races who are in that district fused together. He was laborious and precise and ante dictum of the inventive, but largely endowed with the appreciative faculties. Good-hearted he was shrewdly alive to his interest without being selfish, and would put himself to some trouble, and even expense to assist his friends. He was a stern disciplinarian, and did not relax his discipline when he applied it to his children, and yet the aim of his life was their advancement. He was impressionable, if not impressible, like the most of Irishmen, and was more tenacious of his impressions than most. He was uniformly kind to me, and I owe him nothing but gratitude.

Of the sons I liked James the best. He was crotchety and apt to be sulky with those who would not enter into his crotchets; here, as far as I know, his faults end. He was steadfast, straightforward, independent, quiet, unobtrusive, with more Scotch than Irish blood in his veins, and yet it ran warmly enough for his friends, and at a later period I had the honour to be one of them. His passion was engineering; he was always on the eve of inventing something that was going to revolutionize trade. He used to show me lots of models, and often when we were in Arran together he would walk out to try his boats or his wheels on the streams, as a chemist goes to make an experiment that will test the worth or worthlessness of years of toil, or the astronomer goes to look for the star whose place he has predicted with the help of a million figures. I believe some of those inventions were excellent, but there was always some practical obstacle which prevented their bringing to the inventor either the fame or the fortune they merited. James was an idealist in his way.

John was an assiduous and successful student of medicine, and died of a fever caught during his attendance on the hospital. He made friends with me when I was a very little fellow, and, strange to say, my memories of that friendship are pleasant, though the details I can recall mostly painful. I was a very timid child, that is to ready to imagine or believe every sort of terror, and

sure to dream about it night and day. John, who was at that age when young men are apt to delight in torturing timid children, used to torture me out of my wits. I recollect yet, with a sort of shudder, his showing me a box of ten guineas which he had got for a prize, and saying, in an awful voice, "Do you know what I am going to do with this money? I am going to buy a large pot and *boil* you in it." The earnestness of his manner convinced me at once that such was his intention. I had not learnt to balance probabilities. By a gigantic effort I extricated myself from his grasp, rushed across the green, and burst with loud sobs into the house. "Mother, mother," I screamed, "Johnny Thomson's going to boil me in a pot." I was pacified for the moment, but for a whole fortnight nothing could induce me to enter the house where I used to be a daily visitor. Another day I remember the same malicious John repeated, with the same success, the trick which Margaret Burton had practised on my unsophisticated heart. I used to cast soft looks on Miss Thomson, the daughter of the other Professor William, and, audacious libertine, on Miss Reid, daughter of Church History. John informed me that my affections were known, possibly returned, that I must propose to one of them, and the sooner the better. "Ah, here comes one across the green" (where we used to be walking). Which it was I cannot tell, but I remember being goaded to go down on my knees and kiss the hem of her garment, and declare myself there and then. She smiled, and said she would think about it.

BIARRITZ, May 27th.

There are hours when we think we have forgotten everything; the whole various past seems buried in the dark valley; but here and there, by some strange inspiration of memory, the curtain is lifted and we catch the gleams of dawn on the cottage and the height. There runs a river, there a castle stands with ruined towers, yonder smiles a mossy bank with children playing on it, and the image of ourselves takes part in their games. Trivial

things at unexpected moments recall those associations: a cloud in the twilight, a hillside, a breath of wind across the sea, the fragrance of a flower, are the spells which serve in turn to unlock the sealed-up fountains. Eighteen years had elapsed between my first and second visit to the Continent, and yet when I sailed up the Elbe with Agnes three years ago, the sights and sounds, the lights twinkling through the trees, the German speech, the hotel, the street,—everything seemed to annihilate that lapse of time; the years rolled back as they say they do to drowning men, and I was again with those loved long ago in that little room at Ostend. A boy of seven, I do not remember much of it, only those first impressions which come so vividly to us all when we are placed in circumstances altogether new.

To cross the Channel for the first time is a pleasure which one can only have once in life. It would be hard to say in what it consists; but the men and their manners, the houses with their balconies and quaint old gables, the horses with their bells, the streets with their gleaming cafés and rows of green trees, it is all so different—and there is a delight in the mere sense of difference. There is something in the air, too, which makes one feel light-hearted, and a greater freedom about little things takes away all the restraint of strangeness; we become familiar at once in a new home. I have been told that I ought not to have gone abroad so soon, before I could appreciate the surprise; but if I missed a great deal, I magnified the rest with the wondering eyes of a child, so that my gain was greater than my loss. The bells, as they jingled along, made a sort of magic music in my little ears; the hotels, after that dark College Court, seemed like old-fashioned palaces. I would not have been astonished had I met Roland and his paladins coming down the stairs. Those huge pictures on the walls, that my tired critical eyes now pronounce so coarse and tawdry, were the realization to me then of the *Arabian Nights*; there they were, the palms and the crystal fountains, and the beautiful ladies and the warriors ready for the fight. Then the *table d'hôte*—that was a feast for the gods spread

out before the heroes—nectar served by the hands of Hebe, and drunk to the tunes of faery lands. What do I see now? —a table, with greedy men and women round it, decked with faded flowers and dressed dishes and sour wine, while a beggar is blowing discord through a cracked bugle at the door.

The showman of memory pulls the string, and we are at Bruges. I would like to go back there again, and I feel I might do so without danger of disappointment. "Quaint old Flemish city," how we all loved you in that sunny June, with your squares and towers of ancient time, and windows carved with strange designs! A city of old palaces, the staircases of the Earls of Flanders lead up to the doorways of the inns, and the gateways are crusted yet with armorial crests as when Artevelde and the White Hoods came storming through them from Ghent. It seemed to me then that I would never reach the end of those old winding belfry stairs—the view how wonderful, how dizzy, and the bells how majestic in their repose, how terrible in their motion! I saw them hanging there, with the great bell in their midst, room enough for hide and seek within their enormous boles, and trembled to think of the noise there would be when the chimes began. Father and mother did not know why I was so anxious to get down the stairs, but that was the reason, for I thought the sound would drive me out of the window. We had just set foot on the ground when the "long, stern swell" arose—*Eins, Zwei, Drei*— Never, forever; Forever, never, with a deep voice to and fro. I wonder if I would think those bells as big now? Have you ever gone into a room that you had been in many years before, and expected to find a very large room and found it smaller than you expected? I remember coming back to a table once and saying to myself, "What has happened to this table? It reached to the top of my head, and now it only comes up to my waist; and the mantelpiece, I could just touch it with my hands, and now—!" *Ach, Gott!* how things change in this world! Once I thought that when I was a great man I should get an egg to breakfast—that kept my hopes alive; now the egg is often hard to digest.

We must have been at Ghent, but there is no picture of it in my show-box. I had not begun to be a student of history, nor to care about localizing the dwellings of great men I had never heard of. We passed a night in Brussels, and I have a dim recollection of a bright city, with great shops, and magnificent saloons in the hotels, and a fountain in the courtyard, and bands of music and soldiers passing by. If there is not a fine *Hotel de Ville* there I am mistaken; for, if I do not remember, I have dreamt about it. Liège and Aix-la-Chapelle, too, are blanks. I only recall, with a vividness as of yesterday, our driving in a chaise together, and mother saying, "We have seen nothing yet quite equal to Bruges," and my father, clapping his hands and answering with a smile, "Wait till we come to the Rhine," and again, "Wait till we come to the Rhine."

The Rhine flows on as it flowed long ago, when we sailed together all three; there is the same "exulting and abounding river," the same grey walls "where ruin greenly dwells" along the banks which bear the vine. But I tremble to touch that fairy dream. I fear to break my memories of that summer with a reality which those memories help to transfigure. Things have changed since then, my dearest: you are with me to fill the place of those who will visit that stream no more; but I have older eyes and a harder heart, and the place itself is not all the same. It must have lost half of its beauty in losing all its repose. Sad to tell, that quiet route of ours has become a thoroughfare for fashion and indolence. I expect to find all the gentle places desecrated, and the mossy banks trodden underfoot by throngs of geese and swine. If anything prevents our retracing the steps of that journey, I shall console myself with the thought that I can still keep them as they are, shading themselves off and gilded as they vanish by the rays of imagination. We drove to Cologne. I had a glimpse of it on my route from Hanover to Antwerp three years ago. It was night; I saw out of the dingy diligence the shadow of the great cathedral on the river broad and deep—that was all. Long ago it seemed a grand old town, but almost all

my other recollections are overpowered by that of its chief glory.

It has been said that architecture, since the world began, pursuing three great paths, has reached the end and crown of each in three immortal works. The Temple of Carnac at Thebes, the Parthenon, and the Cathedral of Cologne show us at a glance what the East, and Greece, and the North could do in stone. I have only seen the last; that is twenty-five years ago, and it remains to me, and will remain for ever, a mystery and a wonder of magnificence. I once stood in the churchyard of Salisbury with a fair and wise young lady, and she remarked that she could feel the elevating influence of the spire even when she did not see it: Coleridge has in grander language expressed the same fancy about Mont Blanc. The Cathedral of Cologne is the Mont Blanc of architecture, and it gives an air of sublimity to the whole town. You know the legend of its building: it were doubtless easier to believe it the product of no mortal hand; but it was surely an archangel of light that conceived that glorious front, so rich, so delicate, and yet so gigantic. The unfinished tower alone seems to connect it with the things of earth, and the efforts of man ever aspiring beyond their accomplishment. Enter in through the everlasting gates, and look on that choir springing up as if to claim majestic kindred with the skies—arch soaring above arch, and frieze over frieze, look till you are dizzy with sight, then glance along and see the vista far before you like the avenues of some primæval wood, pillar on pillar, with base and cornice and groove wrought into every lovely and phantastic form with which stone is capable of being inspired, and wonder at the mighty nave, and the great dome with its bastions and turrets bristling like the populous pines of a forest; stand before the altar rich in gold and gems; look again above and see the streams of light that fall from saints and kings and queens of crimson and azure, and flicker over the marble floor; or be there when the organ rolls through the aisles like a sea, and mark how every single beauty of sculpture or colour or music is subservient to the unity which is the greatest feature of the whole—

see all this as I have done, and know that you have seen enough of man's power to give you a hope of man's immortality.

We stayed some little time at Bonn. We lodged near the verge of the town, where we met the Thomsons, and the younger boys and I used to make little paper boats and let them sail far away over the roofs of the houses—of course each boat had its imaginary, sometimes its real tenant, in the shape of a beetle or ant, and we watched their destinies with more interest than friends in after life commonly watch each other's. It was when we were here that we went out for a day to the country, and saw a village dance—it was very pretty—the old men sat and smoked their pipes under the trees, the youths and maidens went in a ring and made music and love together. From Bonn, too, my father, with James and Willy Thomson, went to walk for three days among the craters of the district, and came home with their pockets full of specimens, which James still preserves in his cabinet.

"It was upon a trancéd summer night" that we sailed round the corner of the Rhine which reveals the Siebengebirge, and came gliding into the island of Nonnenwerth. Clear and calm and fair the memory of that night comes back to me from over all the years. One by one the peaks appeared, and stood grandly above the quiet stream, in the grey light which soon faded away beyond their purpling crests. The moon stood out, a glorious crescent on the ridge of Rolandseck, and a bright star led the host of heaven over the brow of Drachenfels. The lights of the little convent were twinkling through the trees, and the boatmen were chanting their evensong as they came and brought us to the shore, where we stepped hand in hand together to live what seems to me like a dream of the gates of heaven. If my summer on the Rhine is an oasis in my life, Nonnenwerth is the oasis within the oasis, the greenest and most beautiful spot amid the whole of this enchanted ground. What were the fabled bowers of bliss, and Hesperian gardens, and isles of palms to me, in this my own Elysium, my fortnight's home of joy? Nonnenwerth is indeed a place where Peris exiled from Paradise

might have been content to dwell. The "castled crag" frowning on the wide and winding river—the tower of Roland rising with its romantic legend—the banks "rich in corn and wine"—the village full of quiet Germans on the opposite shore—the rest of the seven hills with their long waving line of blue ridges, made a fit setting for the island gem.

The convent, in becoming an inn, had not at that time quite ceased to be a convent, for sisters of charity frequented it, and there was daily service in the little chapel, rich in its stained glass windows. If I go there again, I shall seek out that chapel, and fall before the altar, and ask forgiveness for all the sins I have committed since I wandered there, an innocent child. The inn, for so now at least it must be called, had the island for a garden, and there many a time, on delicious days of June, my mother and I lost ourselves among the thickets, to be guided back again by the fragrance of the roses blown to us by the breeze. There we would sit and read the *Legends of the Rhine*, or *Childe Harold.* I read

> "But one thing want those banks of Rhine—
> Thy gentle hand,"

and then I could read no more, for I thought of my sister. There many a night would I chase the fireflies, which clustered in swarms about the roots of the trees, and made the green shades brilliant with their light. The fireflies were an endless delight, for who could doubt they were the fairies at last made visible to me—to me who knew and loved them so well, and spent half my days and many hours of the nights in thinking over their adventures. There was Nymphalin (for I was then reading and admiring Bulwer), and Pippine, and the king of the faeries, and the spirit of the stars, and the gnomes and the elves all come to keep me company. In my imgination the *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Faeryland* got fused together, and I began to make in my mind a kingdom not of this world, into which all the creations of poet or novelist were afterwards to be admitted to join with the heroes of real history, to play new parts in undiscovered lands.

Hildegart was there, then joined to her faithful lover; for I set all things right in my great world of dreams. These dreams may last—I will never quite surrender them—but this fortnight could not last for ever. We had been on the peak of Drachenfels, and sat under Roland's ruined tower, and seen other neighbouring towns and citadels I have forgotten, when the *dies atra* arrived, and, with many tears, I was torn away from the scenes amid which I would willingly have dwelt forever.

The curtain rises for a moment over Coblenz: I recollect the blue Moselle mingling its crystal waters with the great stream, and the town and the bridge, and the grand solemn rock, Ehrenbreitstein—the broad stone of honour—with its row of cannon and looming bastion. It seemed a lurid-looking place, more so even than the rock of St. Sebastian, in my memory, and well deserving all that Byron says about it. I remember too seeing the castles of the two brothers, and reading Bulwer's version of the legend, and the Rat's tower, about which I read Southey's ballad; but my most vivid recollection is of the Lureley, and strange to say it is a painful one. I have said before that I was a timid child, nothing frightened me more than loud noises: they produced such an effect on my nerves that they made me scream. This fear had spoiled my pleasure in the Belfry of Bruges; it rose to a height when I heard that they were going to fire a cannon, to bring out the echoes of the Lureley. I wished to see the rock, but I wished much more to avoid hearing the sound, and signified my intention to retire to the cabin till it was over. As it turned out, the loss of this view was not the only result of my determination. My father, with the best wishes, sometimes made mistakes in his management of me. Among other theories he had one which he put into painfully severe practice, that my foolish peculiarities should be eradicated by force. When I had disappeared he followed me into the cabin, and ordered me to ascend to the deck. I refused to do so till the cannon had fired; he tried to drag me up, I clung to the seat, and, irritated, he exclaimed, "Then stay there all day," and I lost the whole day's view, and felt guilty and miserable.

We were on our way to Frankfort when this happened, and there we spent the most considerable part of our time. I remember our getting settled down somewhere into comfortable lodgings up one or two stairs, and our meeting the Thomsons again, and being tormented once more by John, who said he had found that every one living in Germany might be compelled to be a soldier unless he cut off his right hand, and that I must take my choice; but I would consent to neither alternative, and only felt very much on my guard against everybody, so much so that I would by no means enter into the martial games of the little boys, our neighbours, who wished to make me their playfellow. My father went alone to Vienna by Ratisbon and Passau, returning by Innsbrück and the Tyrol and Munich. My mother and I stayed three months at Frankfort; the Thomsons came often to see us, and we had other varieties enough to prevent our feeling lonely. In the forenoons I would read Byron or Bulwer or a fairy tale, or, when virtue led me to severer toil, I would try to get through some of the German in the *Orbis Pictus*, or the *Lives of Celebrated Men*, till our German teacher came and I prepared my list of nouns. Then I would run down into the market with my kreutzer, and come up rich in an enormous bunch of cherries. I built little houses of books, and filled the great halls I made with toys and dolls and fruit, and imagined marvels. In the afternoons I went sometimes with J. T. to see the boys leaping off the rafts into the Maine; sometimes I went rambling with mother by the towers and gates of the fine old town, and watched her drawing those sketches, which, faint and shadowy though they be, I would not exchange for all the masterpieces in the Louvre or Luxembourg. Frankfort was a pleasant place to live in then, whatever it may be now. It had its romance—old houses within, and green glades without the walls; and yet it was well furnished with all things needful. I should be glad to return there and see if the cherries taste as sweet as ever, if the environs are as luxuriant as when we went out on an afternoon to see the Prince of Homburg drive round his park, or the streets as gay as when there was a rush of lights at night and a

shout—"The Czar, the Czar," and J. T. and I ran and saw the great Nicholas ride by majestic in his open carriage. I would like to see Dannecker's *Ariadne* again: nothing in marble, Greek god or slave, ever impressed me so much. I see her yet, riding on that huge tiger, "clothed on with chastity" and most divinely fair, with the light from crimson curtains falling on her glossy skin, and making it glow with life.

One evening in dewy autumn, there was a knock at the door, and my father entered. He had returned in radiant health and spirits from his long journey, with such adventures to narrate, such sights to tell of, as made us alternately laugh and wonder in our joy. It was near night, I remember, and I had just crept into my little bed, when he brought me a little armful of presents, a Tyrolese hat, and coins and books, and I lay and listened as they talked of lands and people far, far away, and there was a great gladness over all because he was home again. This was the first of those meetings in my picture gallery, where many more were to be afterwards framed and hung.

We went together to Heidelberg, the end of our course. Heidelberg on the crystal Neckar! by "many a tower and turret, and many an ancient town," and many a winding belt of ripening vines we came to thee! Together we wandered through the old castle, and saw the gigantic Tun, and the chapel, and the wall hung with escutcheons; and we walked round the round tower and the colossal rampart, and skirted the hillside together, with its dark green leafy glades, and its feast of blaeberries.

Heidelberg! where the romance of six long centuries comes down and connects itself with the learning and thought of this latest day, with the clear stream beneath and the clear sky above, rising from the faery land of the forest, and overarched by the faery land of the clouds—Turner, and Turner only, in that dream of his, has interpreted your mystery, and made your loveliness visible to men. Old and new are blended in your great red granite walls, which "a thousand battles have assailed in vain," and time has only touched with ruin to make more glorious. We passed through the square court with its

relics, and out by the outer yard, and down the long narrow street, and into the quaint old town, while the bells of the horses—those same bells that first saluted us at Ostend—were ringing as they pulled the little ships up the current of the Neckar, and next morning we bade a long adieu to Heidelberg. I often thought to go there as a student, and dream beside the hyacinths that dream beneath the trees, or spin my philosophic fancies under the walls of the castle, till I had got rid of time, and got back to the days of its glory—but other fates were in store for me.

We went home. I cried when we passed the old places without stopping. I wished at least to see all my old friends once more; but we sailed on unceasingly. I have only a vision of Rotterdam, with its Dutch gables and swamps and continual canals; then the curtain falls, and there is darkness around the close of this journey, and of the first epoch of my life.

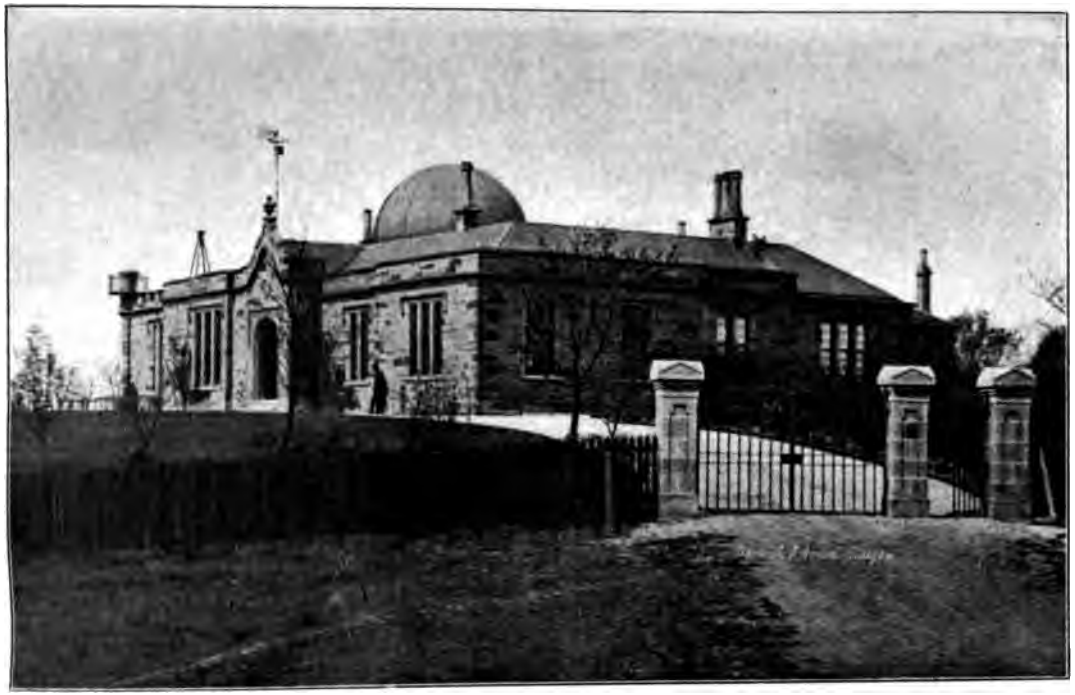
BIARRITZ, May 31st.

Twenty years ago the Observatory stood alone on the hill over which it still presides: a site selected as the highest point between Glasgow and the Kilpatrick range, and, as it then appeared, the least likely to be interfered with by other buildings. I used to mount up the rising ground on the College Green to the old Observatory, which you may remember, and see my father with his fur cap on winter nights peering through the tube of the old telescope. I was alive to the wonders of the old tube. I remember seeing Orion through it for the first time, and Jupiter, and the moon. The experiments in the Natural Philosophy class which my father taught before we went to Germany, used to rivet my attention. I will not forget coming into his study—that dread study with the round chair in it—and seeing him hold a mass of flame in a spoon, and throw it into his hand, and toss it into another, as I fancied, by the help of the Devil himself. When I came back from the Rhine, my own researches with the electrical machine removed some of those wonders from the

land of magic into that of discovery; but my first shock was a terror to me for a long time to come.

But I am retrogressing into a period which we have closed. A few months' residence in the College after our return from the Continent connects the two epochs, but I was soon to enter into a new home and a new life. One afternoon in the autumn of 1840, I and my father and uncle William went to take what seemed to me a very long walk into the country. We passed the outskirts of the town—then about Sauchiehall Street; left behind a few detached houses, which remain to recall the old days of St. George's Road; crossed over the fields where Queen's Crescent was afterwards erected; and went on by an ill-made narrow road that skirted the great black quarry; and reached a farm-house on Horslet Hill, and plunged through ploughed fields to the top, where a crowd of masons were planting the foundations of the future Dome. "Miratur molem Aeneas"; it seemed to me as if they were preparing to build a city. I only remember my wonder, and my weariness on drawing near home, and that I was dragged along between my uncle's and my father's arms.

We all migrated to the Observatory in the spring of 1841. I recollect the flitting, and the lading and unlading of wagons, the damp on the new-built walls, the scrolls of the masons which still adorned them, and the peculiar odour of the new house. We were obliged to live in the ground floor for some time, while the upper rooms were being painted. I remember peeping into the dining-room while it was getting its magnificent coating of oak, and better still the evening after all was over, and the furniture had got settled into its place, and the doors were thrown open. How I danced through the room, gazing at the roof that seemed so lofty, and marching with pride through the spacious halls that were to give me shelter and inspiration for so many years. The new house, now the old house, on the hill, how grandly it stood there all alone—nothing near but the little farm in the valley, nothing to break the view from the white battlements, with the long sweep of upland to the south, the snowy mountains in the north, the gleaming strip of the river beneath in the twilight,



THE OBSERVATORY, GLASGOW

and the great city bathed in the morning sun or glittering with a thousand lamps at night. About a mile off was the village—a village then, and not a dingy suburb—where our old gardeners used to lodge, and whither I used to walk in the morning to bring the letters from the post, or occasionally in the forenoons, with Agnes and our housemaid, to fetch a basket full of fruit during that first summer, before our own garden began to pour forth its abundance. Our garden, what a delight was that! here, over broad green sward and winding walk, I was free to run about alone, or in a world peopled only with my own fancies. On the great stone circle there rose then the framework of the immense fifty-feet telescope, rising with its double ladders like the "mast of some great Ammiral," to a height perilous on that hill of the winds; for now and then in March, when the terrible storms came, it fell with a crash, and lay on the ground covering more roods than Milton allots to the prince of the fallen angels. Between the ladders there was a box swung, something like a cage, in which the astronomer—the bird of prey for the time—was lifted up to a giddy height, while looking in search of his moons or stars through the gigantic tube which was our boast, until Lord Breadalbane's bounty and the discovery of a less cumbrous method of attaining a higher power came to supersede it. Around this circle and about this framework, I, and my cousin, and some young friends used to disport ourselves; and as we swung in the cage and clambered to the supreme heights of the ladder, we were admirals, commanders, conquerors in some great naval fight, with our battle flag, in the shape of some audacious handkerchiefs, flaunting from the peak of the great wooden cone. Those were the days of the telescope's glory: in after years, when the scaffolding was all taken to pieces, it used to lie, a neglected hulk, along the ground beneath the windows of the Transit Room. *Sic transit!*

All the plans about the new Observatory were laid on a gigantic scale. To the west of the telescope, rose a building covering a space of ground not much less than that occupied by the house itself, but built entirely of wood, and destined to be filled by magnetic instruments. It

stood empty there for three or four years, the scene of many a joyous holiday. Though the wooden house could not attract iron, it attracted Agnes and myself as a fitting theatre for our games; hither we stole with my sword and shield and belt and helmet, and with Agnes's dolls, toys which we shared together. My sister was becoming by degrees my constant companion and playmate, so that we were in danger of becoming in reality, what we often were in dress, I half a girl, and she half a boy. We were lords together of all we surveyed in that large empty house. About eighteen months after its erection, a great gale stove in one of the western walls, and tilted the whole basement to one side. The chance of magnetic observations became diminished, but the mansion was only the fairer game for us. We had two entrances to the great palace; a swing hung in the front, where I and my sister and cousins used to disport ourselves, when we were wearied with some mock battle or siege. Alas! the affections which twined themselves about those walls have not even the remains of a foundation to rest on now. I cannot even say, "That is the door which Tommy came through when he was asked to dinner, and there is the corner where Hector found refuge with Achilles at his heels." The very traces of the wooden house are effaced. The cabbages of our worthy assistant were growing over them when I last beheld the ground.

One morning in March 1845, we were all awakened by the screaming of a terrible south-west wind, interrupted only by the frequent whistling of falling slates and chimneys. When we rose we found some of the windows threatened, and had to barricade them. I remember my uncle Davidson, who was with us at the time, rushing to the Green Room and standing with all his weight and strength against the shutter of the window there, which threatened to fly open and let in wind enough to blow the roof off. The wind rose, and tore the lead off the top of the house, and rolled it up into long solid cylinders. About ten o'clock some of us tried to go out and were carried off our feet. The telescope and its stand fell with a crash; the ropes had torn up the enormous stones to which they were fastened,

and hurled them yards in the air. About half-past ten my father pointed from the parlour window towards the magnetic house, "Look, look!" The whole immense fabric was in motion; in another moment the sides gave way as if they had been cannonaded; the roof literally darted into the air; then the planks—some in twos, some in threes, some single—were blown apart as if by the explosion of a mine, and sent whirling over the whole wide field beyond the enclosure of the Observatory garden; a little more wind, and they might have been blown into another world, and for aught I know some of the shreds of that poor house may still be flying about over the surface of this. Such was a Scottish hurricane.

Digging about the roots of the bushes in the garden, or lazily raking the gravel, you might have seen old Norman, our first gardener, and a character like the rest of them. He had come from the north with the tide of immigration that yearly sets to Glasgow, and in his accent and manner bore very distinct traces of his Highland origin. He was slow without being stupid, obstinate without being disobliging, and combined a fair amount of shrewdness with an ignorance which left his sense of wonder unusually large. My father was the best story-teller I ever knew. Many an afternoon, when he was in good humour, he would set us all laughing with some of those adventures, which were never recounted often enough to become tiresome. Among those reminiscences few were more graphic than those which related to old Norman;—you must not ask me to tell you, for without some attempt to imitate the look and voice they are nothing worth—how he received his first view of a nebula through the telescope; how he condemned the moon's conduct in eclipsing the sun, etc., etc.

His successor, old Matthew, was almost equally entertaining. A tall, sallow Scotchman, he had been a good gardener once, but was rather *passé* when he came to us; and though he still preserved a keen eye for flowers, little other work could be got of him; when any digging or trenching had to be done, he managed to find the assistance of his stout sons, or other burly labourers

indispensable. We called him by common consent the land-surveyor. I think I see him yet stalking about the shrubbery, and picking up a rose leaf here and there, with the scent of a tea merchant for his samples, or bending painfully to throw some hardy annual into the stiff soil, or standing erect, full seven feet, and overseeing his underlings.

The first assistant of my father's I remember at the Observatory was a Mr. Mackenzie, a very worthy gentleman, with rather a narrow mind and a bad temper, who lived with us for some time and, I fancy, gave his assistance (for there was no regular fund for the purpose) in return for his board. He was nervously timid, and the happiness of his life was almost ruined by the solitary position of our house. His preparations for burglary, as discovered by one of our servants, were amusing; under his pillow there was placed a revolver, on the table a double-barrelled gun, the kitchen poker was carried up to his room along with the coal hatchet, and when both were placed so that his hand could easily reach them, the worthy man could sleep. He gave me some lessons in writing and the Greek alphabet, just before he left, after which he became a vicar of the English Church, baptized my aunt Christina's second child, married, and died.

The next was a young licentiate of the Church of Scotland, Mr. Leitch, who had distinguished himself by the display of unusual mathematical talent, and attracted my father's attention in the astronomy class. He did all his work with an admirable perseverance, and a degree of slowness almost exasperating. Some indolent people alternate idleness with an amount of activity at times; others, like large bumble bees, never idle nor ever active, drone through a good day's work every twenty-four hours. Of this latter order Leitch was. I see him like a shadow in the past, jotting down with slumberous accuracy the records of the hygrometer,—no morning was wet enough to damp his ardour;—or noting the transit of the stars,—no night was cold enough to make him shiver;—I hear him, as we are discussing metaphysics together over the fireside Monimail, ask if I have any more "Latakia"; I fancy

him delivering his address as Principal of King's College, Toronto, and the images are of the same substantial, excellent man of this world and the next. There was one theme on which he could and would descant with animation, and that was the iniquity of the Roman Catholic Church. I remember his attempts to impress on my mind a more correct historical view of a lady, who was for some years my great heroine of romance, Mary, Queen of Scots. He was fond, too, of graphic illustrations, and endeavoured to give me a vivid notion of the "very place where wicked people go," by comparing the fire supposed to burn there with that which had just taken the skin off one of my fingers. Afterwards, though still orthodox, but "leaning rather to liberal ways," his illustrations were on more abstract lines, and at Monimail one of his efforts was to draw from some discoveries he had been making about his bees, an inference confirming the doctrine of the Trinity.

But let us hasten to "sing the praises of Rollo the brave." Mackenzie and Leitch were birds of passage; they rested at the Observatory, and went on their way rejoicing or otherwise. John Rollo stayed with us to the last; he seemed to have become a part of the house, as regular as the transit-room clock. I do not know how either house or clock can go on without him. For eighteen years he came at the fixed hour, took his notes, went to his room, calculated like Babbage's machine till one o'clock, went home to dinner, came up again, and dug at his cabbages on his little plot of ground, "took the notices" at three, went to his room—the Lower Dome room—and calculated like Babbage's machine again till Polaris or some other star shone out to demand his attention, or the moon expressed a wish to see herself and be seen on the Breadalbane mirror, after which he went home to his energetic wife and child, at the gate-house near the Botanic Gardens. A faithful servant, if there ever was one. After all, he was much more curiously made than anything done by Babbage. Only the calculating part of his mechanism was put together like clockwork. He was a tolerable classic, and used to assist me in old days in hammering over hard

passages; and on religious and social matters he had notions of his own.

He was a sincere Baptist; had been dipped deep into the slough of prophecy. Many an awful book he used to lend me, with the assurance that by the reading of such he had been rescued from scepticism. "If I had not been taught," he would tell me, with his peculiar voice, "to see how those prophecies were all fulfilled, I would certainly have become a freethinker, for I was of an inquiring mind. Is it not remarkable how the French turn out to be the Frogs?" He attributed almost all the diseases of the time not so much to the use of ardent spirits or animal food, though he abjured both, as to the drinking of tea. Sometimes he lectured me on this point with an energy that threatened to become frantic; he would rise from his seat and stamp on the ground, as he stammered out denunciations of the poison. "Tea, tea," he cried, "is the curse of this generation!" The great theory in science which he is still labouring to establish is that all changes of the weather depend on the moon. Many an hour has my good nature compelled me to listen to his dissertations on this question, and many a sheet of badly-written figures have I been made to glance at in proof of a discovery, on the ground of which he was bold enough to write cards of prediction for the weather of each month in the year. His great social idea was non-resistance. You might have knocked him down with impunity, and it would be ungracious to say that his theory in this instance was accommodated to his practice, for he was never afraid to come up the hill at night unless there were some suspicious-looking Irish in the neighbourhood, nor to walk in the garden unless the dogs were loose.

Good man, let me say nothing harsh of you—the associate of so many years, constant amid so many trials and changes. I would not like to look out from the windows of the old house again without a hope of seeing your well-known figure limp along the gravel, or your cap lying on the bench, while you are popping your kind old head in at the stand, to "take the notices."

From the garden let us pass into the nursery, where I

spent the nights of many years and a fair portion of the days, sometimes reading from the time when it was only Caleb or Frank to the evenings over Jahn's Horace and Voss's Eclogues; sometimes playing with Agnes alone, or with her and other small friends. There many an evening I have lain and listened to the croaking of the frogs who came in hosts down the grating, and made friends with each other and with me; there often have we trembled on Saturday afternoons after I had come home from school, and thrown aside my books, when we were in the midst of some long game, and a step approached the door. Caleb Stukeley, in the romance of that name, did not start more awkwardly when he heard the voice of his father in the scene with the dangerous Emily, than I did when my father surprised me "trifling away my time" with my sister's dolls. Of him I shall have more and more to say as this narrative runs on, and as I shall sometimes have to dissent from his views, let me preface all those poor criticisms by declaring that I have hardly ever known a purer or a greater man. My first recollections of him at College and on the Rhine are almost all sunny; but you may not have forgotten his severity at the Lureley rocks. Two or three instances of the exercise of a similar discipline, which embittered some of my early days at the Observatory, still cling to my memory.

Sometimes I was silently dogged on such occasions; at others, I would retire to my room and give myself over to acid and malignant thoughts. I remember once being bent on a ride on a pony, and crying because it was refused, and then being told that had I not cried I would have got it. This unwise admission made me wild with rage, and I stormed about the house, with clenched fists and streaming eyes, for a whole afternoon. But our most serious differences soon begun to be about my task work. My father thought that after I came home from the Rhine I should put away childish things, and march on steadily to meet the great destinies he had in store for me. He forgot that, at the age of nine or ten, I was still a child, and could not, if I would, assume the garb or the manners, or appreciate the interests, of a man. Because I was precocious

in some things, he forgot that I was, on that very account, likely to be backward in others. But I must not anticipate; my introduction at least, to study, was made sufficiently fascinating. When I could read large books, my father began by giving me the lives of great men in the form of anecdotes; and, better still, gave me, from time to time, a lecture himself on the great events of the world. I remember nothing more delightful than those lectures. I was all ear when each hour began, and all on fire with excitement when it closed; and I had heard how Leonidas fought at Thermopylae, or Manlius kept the capitol, or Napoleon stormed the bridge of Lodi. Each step in the history was like the revelation of another sphere. I had, day by day, that pleasure which in after life is the highest and rarest of all, that of knowing something wholly new and full of human interest. I hung on those lips, which were as eloquent to teach a child the first rudiments of knowledge, as to thrill the thousands of a crowded hall with an enthusiasm like that of childhood. Sometimes the lectures were not given, and once or twice I fell on my knees to beg, and once at least succeeded in obtaining, a lesson that was meant to be deferred. My teacher did not realize how natural it was for the boy of nine years old to run from the lecture room to the nursery, and build Carthage again with his bricks, and lead Hannibal across the Alps with the elephants of a Noah's ark, or march Alexander against Darius by the help of dolls on the carpet, or mock the thunders of Leipsic on the green, with a brass cannon and a pennyworth of powder.

The library, my father's delight and pride, was mine too, as I walked with wondering eyes through the spacious hall, and glanced up to the stained glass windows on the roof, or over the long lines of magnificent volumes that lined every shelf, and lay piled in every cupboard, along the sides of the room. The best editions of the best authors in every language were there, gleaming in purple and gold, from Laplace and Lagrange and Homer and Newton, to Cervantes and Le Sage. How I used to glory in getting down some of the grand folios—Lavater or Flaxman — and gazing over their pictured pages. I

remember a splendid copy of *Don Quixote* which used to amuse me, and the illustrations of a gigantic Tasso, and the rich binding of an Ariosto, and the *Book of Archery*, and Bulwer's *Siege of Granada*, which made me fall in love with Leila and the Moors. There was a cupboard in the north-west corner full of books especially my own, the *Orbis Pictus* and the *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Matho* and *Letters from Palmyra*—history and fiction—little gems of science and romance. There were the works of Miss Edgeworth and Mary Howitt—tales in verse and tales in prose—*Edward and his Little Friends*, *Sergeant Bell and his Raree Show*, *Uncle Philip's Stories about Dogs*, *Stories about Christmas*, *The Holiday Book*, Grimm's *Mährchen*, in English, and the *Faery Mythology*, and a host of faery tales—all which I devoured, and rushed unsatiated on the larger shelves without. There I soon found new fuel for my growing imagination,—ghost stories which I should never have been allowed to read, and which cost me many a wakeful night; the *Arabian Nights*, in which I revelled as in a new world of gorgeous dreams; and Scott's novels, which came seasonably to connect my wandering fancies with a more real life. Turning to more substantial food, I passed from his romances to his narratives of facts, and drew my first notions of Scottish history from the *Tales of a Grandfather*. Linking together the fancy pictures in *Waverley* and *The Abbot* with the actual personages they represent, I became, as before stated, a zealous votary of the fair Queen Mary—a devotion which it took ten years to shake; and a Jacobite, worthy of a great-grandmother who saved the unhappy Prince Edward's life in her wine cellar, and a great-grandfather who paid the penalty of his mistaken patriotism on an English scaffold. Turning towards science I read through the *Gallery of Nature*, and got a notion of meteorology enough to give me some interest in what was going on around me, and a few ideas of geology to be developed afterwards. At an early period I had been introduced to a land more wonderful than that of history or science:

"Aus alten Marchen winkt es
Hervor mit weissen Hand
Da singt es und da klingt es
Von einem Zauberland."

The first verses I remember reading were the paraphrases and some hymns. I recollect the sort of pleasure I used to derive from the rhythm, when there was rhythm in the lines, and a habit I had of chanting in a monotonous way when I was called upon to recite them. I read *Childe Harold* on the Rhine, and it wrought on my fancy like a spell—here was another sort of faery land with a greater glow than all. Before we came to the Observatory, my mother used to read pieces of Wordsworth. I remember my delight on hearing the *Blind Highland Boy*, and how I almost tired her by my constant requests to hear it read over. About the same time, my father read aloud to us Byron's *Island* and Scott's *Lord of the Isles*. It was a double pleasure to hear him read, and I think he read poetry better then than more lately, when he himself grew to be less of a poet. Those evenings inspired me with another life; I grew physically warm with delight, and the thrilling sense and sound made my heart beat with the sort of rapture which is reserved for early youth. My sense was, of course, not awakened to appreciate the higher beauties of poetry till many years after. Moore's *Lalla Rookh* was to me perfect, especially the Fire-worshippers, which I still regard with some affection, so impossible is it to forget our earliest sympathies. Gray's *Churchyard* and Goldsmith's *Edwin and Angelina* were, of course, favourites; but Wordsworth gradually displaced them all, and reigned supreme in my mind down to a much later period. Curiously enough I took a dislike to Burns; his *Scots Wha Hae* impressed me, but I was disgusted with *Tam o' Shanter* and *The Jolly Beggars*. Someone praised them, and I said, "What, do you think that vulgar swearing man a great poet?" I was so delicate in those days I could not bear a coarse word or allusion, an oath made me shrink like a sensitive plant. My father said, "You will change your opinion about Burns by and by"; and so I did. As soon, or sooner, the notes of my mother's piano lured me into other realms still more glorious. Alive to every refinement of art, music had always been her peculiar passion, and she soon sought to make me a partaker of her joy. I have been told that before I could walk I

used to dance to the tunes of that piano, and keep time with baby feet, with an accuracy which the narrators of such events are apt to exaggerate. Certainly those tunes are among my earliest memories; and still, in the quiet hours of summer evenings, they are wafted to me from the distance, like notes of an Aeolian harp hung in heaven, while the past leans over my shoulder and fills my eyes with tears. The years roll back and restore what they have stolen away; I see her again who was my morning and my evening star, touching those chords with her taper fingers, whlle I am sitting entranced by the celestial melodies of Beethoven, and Handel, and Mozart, or, still farther back, listen to the voice so "low and sweet," singing some song of sunny Italy, or Scotch *Blue Bells*, or of the *Better Land.*

Old house—then a new home—old house on the hill, how have my affections become twined round you! From those grand great battlements, for twenty years, I have watched every glory of the earth and sky—at morning, noon, and night. Within those walls there is nothing glorious I have not heard, nothing noble I have not vainly dreamt of, nothing terrible I have not seen, nothing strange I have not learnt to realize. You stand there grandly alone, and yet, wherever I go, I will carry you in my heart, a background of all my memories, ready to come with them from darkness into light, till all the present appears a dream, and I seem to waken again, and move about in the far past of those half-forgotten days.

BIARRITZ, June 2nd.

My last letter must have wearied you with its length. This one will be short by way of recompense. It will begin by leading you back to still more distant days, and bring you down ere it closes to the summer of two years ago; but it will be a letter of fragments, gathering together a heap of scattered recollections. For a long period we went almost every Christmas to Fifeshire, and almost every summer to Arran. Thus early I grew familiar with the sound of the two great voices of Liberty—the mountains

and the sea—and to their ennobling influence I owe much of the little strength and power that still remain to me. I will try to recall, one by one, the memories, dim or bright, of several successive visits to this single island Arran, in which the grandeur and beauty of Scottish scenery are so well concentrated.

I. The first is of our landing on the shore of Brodick. A full quarter of a century has elapsed since then. I can only recall the ferry-boat and the bleak beach, and something of the shadow of the hills, and a disaster which befel me. It was a cold evening, and I ran with the servant, while my father and mother followed with the luggage, up to the cottage which was to be our home for a month, and sitting down on a stool that stood near the fire, proceeded to warm my little hands. Unfortunately the stool had only three legs, and my weight, leaning forward, was enough to overset it. I fell right upon the burning ribs, and before my cries brought a speedy rescue, they left their impress in great bars of blisters across my unhappy face. Perhaps I was partially stunned with terror, for I do not remember the pain. I only recall, with a distinctness as of yesterday, the soft touch of my mother's hands as she bathed the wound. I would be burnt again many times to feel once more that tender pressure. I was blind for some weeks, but at last the bandages were taken off, and my eyes opened unimpaired to the world in which they were to see so many strange sights.

II. In the summer of the next or the following year we went to Corrie, and I saw new wonders of the mountains and the sea. We lived with the Douglasses, a good family, who still come to take passengers from the steamer and land them on that rocky coast. They had to assist us in our toils both for livelihood and relaxation. Those were different days; Arran was little known, or, at least, unfrequented; and the salutary strictness by which the proprietor has kept the island quiet was as yet uncalled for. We went and literally found nobody there but the natives; for us alone the great hills frowned in their granite glory, and the waves dashed among the trap dykes of the shore. It was a glorious solitude, but not without its

disadvantages. There was no thoroughfare, no congress, and consequently no market and no food; oatmeal and whisky, and a few vegetables from the garden, were all we could get. The only refuge was the sea, and here the proverbial indolence of the Highlanders was a stumbling-block. Nobody could be got to fish for us. The Celtic race has a sort of repugnance to this means of attaining subsistence, which even hunger has not been found strong enough to overcome. The people of Galway and Ross-shire have been found starving by the beach of seas swarming with fish. What they would not do to fill their own mouths we could not expect them to do for others. My father was obliged to hire a boat, and man it with himself and Douglass and a boy, and go forenoon or afternoon, as wind and tide permitted, to find to-morrow's dinner. I used occasionally to accompany those expeditions, when I remember watching the long lines as they went trailing through the surge, and the great fish that were every now and then dragged splashing and tumbling into our boat. Our constant prey was a cargo of the huge eels that infest those seas—hideous monsters, how they came up writhing and grinning with their ugly teeth and eyes; how they kicked and wriggled in the boat, once dangerously tearing up the very planks; how they used to roll about on the sand indomitably refusing to die, till their skins were taken off—ugh!—and they were cut into slices, and made into soup which was pronounced excellent, but which I did not relish much. I can tell you we had enough of the sea that summer. As for the mountains, was I not carried up Goatfell itself on Douglass's back? I was very cold all the way, and very frightened when we gained the top, and I saw the awful crags around me with a sense that the world was toppling over, and very hungry till I got settled behind a great big stone, and eagerly devoured the chicken, which I am ashamed to confess I had been longing for all the day.

III. The third time we went to Glen Sannox to renew our fisheries, and led a life of yet more utter solitude, beneath the shadow of yet darker hills, in the little house at that time inhabited by the worthy Gaelic clergyman,

Dr. Mackay and his family, who were willing to let out a few rooms in the summer. My father used to amuse us by recounting how one day, when he and my mother were discussing household matters, a messenger suddenly rushed in to announce that Miss Helen Mackay had just killed a calf. The good people had a farm, and we were occasionally relieved from the necessity of dining off eel-soup. Dr. Mackay used to preach in a church which had a back entrance communicating with his kitchen, and Mrs. Mackay used now and then to open the door, through which a strong odour of a Highland *cuisine* came and diffused itself over the congregation—a strange congregation, largely supported by a troop of old women who used to sit with huge mutches on their heads, and with their bare feet resting on the bench in front, drank in eagerly every word of the discourse. The worst of it was that their admiration was not silent, but every now and then, when the eloquence was more than usually stirring, it gave vent to itself in yells so shrill and piercing, that I could not be induced to return to the wild performance.

IV. The summer after our return from the Continent we went along with aunt Christina to Lamlash. In that quiet bay you have no idea of the savage beauties of the more northern part of the island; but it has charms of its own, sweet walks and drives which we were disposed to enjoy to the full, and views from the high grounds of the grey hills in the distance. I remember playing about with our neighbour's children among the copses there, and especially the rides we used to take together on a cart which stood in the adjacent field. I recollect making friends with some pretty little girls, and walking with them to meet my father come by the steamer from somewhere or other; and sitting with my mother while she sketched by the windows; and aunt Christina read to us extracts from *Tristram Shandy*, which her husband literally swore by for several years, and I broke into one of my immoderate fits of laughter and was rebuked. I remember many a quiet afternoon "sailing with her about the summer waters," while my mother sat on the prow, and read *Oenone*, or the *Two Voices*, or Landor's *Pericles and Aspasia*.

The Thomsons were again, during part of the time at least, our close companions. Sometimes we all went on the bay together with rods and hooks, and here I caught my first, and probably my last, fish. How clearly I remember hearing Willy Thomson shout out, "Johnny has caught a fish." A little thing it was, but I did not relish the sport in those days when I made a gospel of "Hart-Leap-Well."

I recall very distinctly an attempt we made to row to Pladda, and how a storm came and drove us into Whiting Bay, and how glad we all were to get safe home again. On another occasion we—*i.e.* Dr. James, and James and William Thomson, and my father and mother and myself —started for Holy Island, expecting to get across and return to the others, whom we had left behind, in about four hours. The wind which blew us over rose so fast as we were crossing that we began to feel uneasy, and, by the time we got on shore, all chance of returning by the same boat we came in was at an end. We were literally shipwrecked on the island, and when the steamer, to which we made signals in vain, had passed, we began to think over the possibility of remaining all night in the one little house which redeems the place from desolation. At last the storm slightly abated, and late in the evening some fishermen who had seen our plight, or been sent to seek us, came and brought us over in their sloop. I recollect the moving of many lights, and the barking of dogs, and the glad murmur of many voices, as we landed safe when the stars were shining on the beach.

v. There comes a sort of break in my memory between an earlier and a later period, during which we may have made several visits to Arran, of which I can only recall one, and that but faintly. It was to Brodick again. I remember the castle amid the woods, and walking with my mother up Glen Rosa, and seeing the moon set over Ben Nuis, that most graceful of mountains. We went to Glen Sannox with Nan, and she began to cry and say she was frightened at those ugly hills. If she had not learnt to distinguish between fear and awe, I had not learnt confidence *in*, though I had confidence enough *on*,

the sea. Was it on this occasion, certainly it was in Arran, that my father tried to induce me to swim, by ordering me to go into a pool which I thought deep enough to drown me? I remonstrated, and then refused, and he, turning round to my mother, said, "Come, let us leave a fellow who is in his inmost nature a coward." He came to have a different opinion.

VI. I had learnt something before my next visit to Arran. It was the year before I went to Kelso, during which year I had been attending the Natural History class at College, and from lectures and books had attained a pretty fair acquaintance with the leading facts of geology, and the main features of the Scottish rocks. I came to Corrie with my hammers to spend a fortnight by the beach and among the hills, exploring the wonders of their formation. During that fortnight I made the collection of specimens from Arran rocks, which used to lie in the shelves of my cabinet at the Observatory. I walked about on the shore and examined the boulders, and found strange bits of stone embedded in them—on one occasion what I took to be a yet undiscovered granite, bearing, in point of date and character, the same relation to the old rough granite of the Goatfell range as that does to the fine white rock of Ben Vahran and the opposing coast of Ireland. I reached the dykes and found specimens of greenstone and pitch-stone, and the charred sandstone which is hardened by the contact of the once fiery mass, and scooped into honeycomb by the action of the ever-returning waves. I scrutinized the caves and bore away innumerable conch shells and trilobites, and bits of ancient pine. I scaled Am Binnein and gathered the dark smoke crystals from the rock.

Another day I and young Robert Douglass started on foot from Corrie, reached the summit and came down upon Brodick, touching at the mill-dam by the way, and breaking bits off the junction there in about three hours after we had started. It was, properly speaking, my first view from Goatfell, and I may live thirty years without losing the impression of the moment when, after winding up the steep cone, I first set foot upon the table-land which crowns it. The day was beautifully clear, and we

saw the whole Firth with Ailsa and the islands sparkling like gems set in azure. The island of Rathlin and Ireland bounded our view to the south-west, to the north-west gleamed the Hebrides with their peaks, and to the east the mountains of Argyleshire rose in their multitudinous magnificence. But the most wonderful part of the sight, that which, now that I have scaled a hundred hills and seen the sun rise over a hundred miles of snowy Pyrenees, still makes this view from Goatfell something unique among my memories, was the prospect which seemed to lie right at our feet, where the terrific peaks that bound the north of Glen Rosa and Glen Sannox were lifting their emulous heads. It was as if some storm, terrible beyond all human imagination and stirred up by "demons down under the sea" to overwhelm us, had been by some more mighty wizard's hand "frozen in a moment" into walls and bars, and spikes, and hollow cairns of imperishable granite.

VII. Weary of hard work one glorious day in August, I was hanging my head on my desk, when my father entered my study exclaiming, "It's no use this, John, you are tired; go off to Arran and ramble about the hills for three days and come back strong." This was among the commands against which I sometimes remonstrated in my zeal, but to which I always yielded. Away I went and landed at Corrie, with my knapsack over my shoulders, and a good staff in my hand. The hills gleamed over the sea with the promise of an unclouded sky, and I resolved to cross them at the head of Glen Sannox, and fall down on Loch Ranza. I bathed in the clear waters, and starting on my journey with a good heart went up and up deeper among the gigantic heather, and under the shadows of the solemn glen. Never shall I forget the hour after I had gained the first terrace of the mountains towards my right, when I rested and looked around me on the scene. I have stood since then alone amid the blackness of the Coolin hills, and seen the Hebrides gleaming far in the solitary main, and watched the waves rolling in a stormy sunset over the Bay of Biscay, and caught the first gleam of morning over the Pyrenees; but never on

land or sea have I beheld anything to eclipse the memory of that evening in Glen Sannox. Around me were the ramparts of grey granite, vast, lonely, solemn like Eternity, with their riven peaks just beginning to throw back the first purple of the loveliest twilight I ever saw; before me was a slope of lichen, and an apparently impassable wall; behind me a deep sea of heather, and green fields, and sheep far away, and the ocean fading into the sky in the distance. No sound but the fall of a cataract over the rocks broke the silence; the very summer flies were hushed to sleep, or banished from so deep a solitude:

"Ave Maria! 'twas the hour of prayer."

This was my Church, that I told you of in a letter long ago. Perhaps I am not sufficiently susceptible to religious emotions, but at that hour, in that great Cathedral whose aisles and pillars were reared by God's own hand, with the valley for its pavement, and Heaven itself for its dome, and the sunset over Chair Mohr for its altar-light, I felt an irresistible summons to kneel to the Giver of all good, and pray for a renewed heart, and ask Him to grant me grace to live in a manner worthy of His wonderful world.

On my way an adventure befell me, which you can only appreciate when you know that, in point of Sabbath observance, the people of Arran and Bute bear the same relation to Scotland, that Scotland does to the rest of the world. They are not a particularly moral people. If you propose to marry a girl in one of those islands, you are free to anticipate the nuptials by way of experiment. Like the Welsh, they are no votaries of St. Anthony. When you engage a servant, she will probably reserve to herself the privilege of 'bundling.' But they have superstition enough to cover a multitude of sins, and on Sunday they throw all their sanctimony into the scale of absolution. A smile on that day is bad, a laugh sacrilegious. We had a servant from the West, who wished to whip me for jumping one forenoon in the nursery while the church bells were ringing. The population of Rothesay came with sticks and stones to pelt the passengers who came in

the 'Emperor'; they tried to starve a tradesman who took hold of the rope that was thrown on the pier from a steamer on the boards of which no strict Presbyterian will ever set his foot. It must have been a native of Bute who was caught with a gimlet, boring a hole through the hold, sanctifying, as he thought, his instrument to holy ends—an instrument in the hands of an avenging Providence. The good folk of Arran would like to punish Sunday-travelling with death. Conceive, then, the horror of a worthy congregation which I encountered on the way to the kirk that Sunday afternoon. There they came, youths and maidens in their best attire, old men and old women with mutches newly starched, on foot or jogging along on donkeys by twos or threes, all talking Gaelic and staring at me. I only thought of the beautiful morning, and the view I was to have from the hill, and how I should find my way there. I must ask some one, but who would understand me? Probably that respectable-looking man walking along leisurely with a grandmother on each arm. "Please, sir, can you tell me the way to the top of Ben Vahran?" He stopped, he gazed, he looked at me for a while in silence, a thrill of terror ran through the crowd. At last, finding voice, he said solemnly, "Young man, this is not a daay to go to the top of Ben Vahran." *Infandum!* I had addressed the minister in the very heart of his flock. I said, "It is warm, but I will manage it," and made my escape. Good man, I doubt not he was indebted to me for the most impressive point in his sermon, as he described a much hotter place, to which I was going as fast as my legs could carry me.

On reaching Brodick, I thought of rest, and where to get it. The inn was so full they would not even give me a sofa. Every cottage was crammed. Must I, with my blistered feet, walk eight miles more on to Corrie, and then have to sleep on the beach after all; or should I climb Goatfell and get into the tent which seemed so near and so brilliant? Not a room, for love or money. Yes, there was a charitable dame at last who had not, and now perhaps had, and yet had not, a bed for me. There was a gathering of dames, and a consultation, what

could it mean? the end was, "Come in." Here was at last a good peat fire, warm water for my feet, and a good plate of porridge and milk, what better to sleep upon? Bedtime came. I was shown out of doors, and asked to ascend a ladder which, beginning on the ground, ended in a loft. Too glad to get my head lain down anywhere, I rushed up, and after being stunned by a blow from the roof, looked round me; there were four beds in the narrow garret, ranged alongside of each other. A and B were occupied by two boys. I was bidden lie down on C, and D remained empty. Meanwhile I was too tired to sleep, and although the candle was withdrawn, lay speculating over the events of the day and the lodging for the night. An hour or more may have passed, when the little trap-door on the floor of the garret was reillumed by the light. I lay still. By and by, in the glimmer, for the candle was evidently left at the foot of the ladder, a head appeared. I listened, breathing lightly; the head listened, breathing heavily; it rose, it became a body, stopped again to listen; all was still, it ascended and stepped into the room. You are prepared for a murder at least? From what I saw of the lower part of the body, I was prepared for what I heard—the unlacing of stays, and the daughter of the house lying down to sleep on bed D. . . . Next morning I took the steamer home, and got through a great many chapters of my *Tacitus*—thanks to three days in Arran. . . .

BAGNÈRES DE BIGORRE, June 6th.

About the year 1840, a company of gentlemen, who resided in the fashionable quarters of the west of Glasgow, dissatisfied with the principles or practice of the old schools, determined to establish an institution which should at once redeem the dignity of education, and serve as a convenient seminary for their children, being situated near their houses. Everything was to be taught here on a more philosophical plan, nothing was to be learned by rote, lessons in natural history were to assume a prominent place in the curriculum, no child was ever to be flogged or constrained, but regular marks were to be given for

conduct, regularity, and industry; and reports, which the teachers, from their attendance on the playground and class-room, would be well qualified to make, were to be drawn up.

I may almost say I wasted six years in this school, which, partly from something radically wrong in the idea, still more from the unfortunate incompetence of the original teachers, was an utter failure. It fell to pieces about the year 1848, and I can see little ragged boys and girls romping about in the grounds where I was initiated into the world of strife. I entered the Western Academy in the autumn, or rather the early winter of the year 1842; my going there was prompted by some of the proprietors who were friends of my father, and it was the nearest school to the Observatory. I remember meeting at muster soon after it opened, when our names were called over by the masters assembled together. Let me enumerate them in order. There was, first, Mr. Nelson, chief classical teacher there for three years, a worthy gentleman, whom, with all his errors, I continue to remember with feelings of respect, mixed with affection. He was an excellent scholar and a man of taste, but one of the worst of teachers. His fashion was to take some difficult author and read with his sonorous voice some very free and dignified translation, which he was well pleased if we brought to him next day. He never dreamt of asking us to explain a construction or conjugate a verb, so that all he really did was to give us a relish for the sound of Latin, and a trick of fine English. I remember his giving a lecture at Partick once, on his hero, Napoleon. I thought at the time it was very fine, but I suspect it must have been rather florid. Good man, with his portly figure and protuberant eyes, I wish I could hear of his doing something better than teaching boys at a village school.

Mr. George Gregg began life as an officer, and I believe ended it as a showman. There was a period between, during which he was head-master of English at the Western Academy. A good-natured, tall, handsome man, he had a weak head and a strong body. His knowledge was fair, and his manners prepossessing. I remember some pleasant

traits of his kindness, as his taking a lot of his boys through on a trip to Edinburgh, and showing us all the sights, his working out a sum for me which his brother had set as a task, his coming to take tea with us and making himself so agreeable that he won the good graces of my father, who had previously thought him something of a humbug, an opinion to which he reverted. His faults as a teacher were general shallowness, fickle partialities, and a want of dignity. He joined in our games in the yard, and used to say that he knew how to forget the master in the playfellow; he forgot that he did not know how to forget the playfellow in the master. He at first joined with the other masters in petting me, and afterwards, irritated I fancy by my irregular attendance, threw me over in disgust. His brother William, a better teacher and cleverer man, taught us writing.

During my first year, I had to deal more directly with the four assistants. A Mr. Hutchison taught us Latin in a class which I, for the first two months, attended very ill. He was a kind enough, ordinary man. Mr. Murray taught us English. I remember conning over Reid's *Lessons in English Composition*, and thinking I would never learn to compose. Mr. Slack was our teacher of arithmetic, an excellent young man, and a great admirer of Mr. Nelson. In the playground I felt for the first time in a strange land, where every man's hand was against me. I had lots of battles, with various fortune. I remember no more but that I often came off worst, and only got scolded at home when I did. I only once in my life fought for amusement, so that the sun often set upon my wrath.

I had some pleasant companions whom I liked to visit, and who used to come to see me, but my associations with the playground are mostly painful. My school days have none of the happy memories that are generally supposed to belong to that period of life, and of my schoolmates there are only one or two I should care either to see or hear of more. I was always effeminate, and fond of quiet, whereas a healthy schoolboy is the rudest and roughest of beings. When they made too much noise about the swing, I would drop my rope and wander to some quiet corner,

and trace the map of Alexander's conquests, or, better still, the design of some new faery land on the sand. Out of those scrawls grew the imaginary map of a new world—that world of my childish dreams when all things were to be made even.

During the first two or three months, I attended my classes, owing to ill health or other causes, with great irregularity and made very little progress. That Christmas (1842) we went to Fife.

After Christmas I somehow or other took a great start. My progress was taken as the promise of yet better things; I was fired with the desire of retrieving myself, and ere the session closed, I had taken the first place in all my classes, in the geography so conspicuously that the silver medal, usually given to the senior, was transferred to the junior class, to be hung around my neck in presence of some half hundred mammas and papas, with a long speech about the infant prodigy.

Worthless, fatal prizes, how proud I was of them! I had heard of three as mine when I went to Mr. Murray, "Who is to get the prize for English composition?" "A gentleman of the name of Nichol," was the answer. "Then I will have four prizes," and I danced up to a big boy intending to impress him with the intelligence; he very properly told me to go to the devil. I will have more to say of prizes afterwards, meanwhile let me utter one word of protest against them. For one boy that is stimulated by such emulation to healthful work, ten are ruined by being led to look at the guinea's stamp instead of the gold. The holidays had come, but for a prodigy like me there was no rest: exhausted as I really was I must remember that the object of life was to "distinguish myself." We had been offered a prize for an essay on "Great Britain"; mine must be something wonderful. I was given a book, about the size of Johnson's Dictionary, on England and her Colonies, and set to write an abstract of it—some fifty pages of my big half-text—the labour of a whole summer's vacation. I started in the Latin with my old friends; but some difficulty occurring about my hours, I was put into a higher class with boys who had begun a year

before me. I was first and second alternately; on the days when I was first my father would speak to me, when I was second he would not, and on those days I used to linger on the road home. Nelson was very partial to me, and I easily carried off another prize—that of arithmetic—with him. General views of geography delighted me, but the details of cities and counties which we wanted in the higher class, and never have wanted since, were too much for my memory. I got no prize there, and as for my essay, Gregg said he would give the prize to no other, but he could not give it to me, the handwriting was so bad.

Another summer past, during which I remember reading through the *Gallery of Nature*. Another winter came, and I was pushed on still further in Latin, to write verses, and read Cicero's *Milo*, and *Plautus*, and *Juvenal*. I had learnt to translate without knowing more of the construction than a boy of the first form at Rugby. Other things went on as before, giving promise of another unhappy year, when towards Christmas I fell ill of scarlet fever. It seemed a slight attack, and we slighted it, so that I caught cold. A little later, when we were at Lebanon visiting aunt Alice, I had an attack of inflammation of the liver; my health was evidently broken, I had to be withdrawn from school, and my studies were utterly broken for two whole years.

BAGNÈRES DE BIGORRE, June 8th.

We went together to Ireland in the autumn of 1845; but before I take you with me over the water, I wish to tell you something more about our home, as it then was. And first, let me introduce you to the friends of the little parlour of the Observatory. Let us suppose my father sits there in some sunny mood, reading aloud, while Nan sits at his feet, and my mother and I are listening with eager eyes to a chapter of history, or an essay of his own on mountain ranges, or a speech he is to deliver next day about the war, or on the national schools, or a book of *The Excursion*, or a canto of the *Revolt of Islam*. I have not yet come to the time when he exercised the greatest influence on my life; but my sense was even then opening to the

appreciation of a head, which, for grasp and quickness of apprehension, I have never seen equalled, and of a heart as full of large capacities of love as the sky itself with its stars. Tennyson speaks of "all subtilizing intellect, all comprehensive tenderness," and in my father I recognized the combination of qualities which make a man noble and a woman lovely. Few have had opportunities equal to mine of estimating the varied powers of that massive mind. His eloquence, his vivacity, his grace were known to all; but all did not know in how many directions he turned that penetrating glance, over how many fields he walked with that familiar step. During his life he seemed to be less original than he was, simply because he knew so much; I have heard him say he loved poetry too well to write verses; perhaps he was too discursively learned to be a great discoverer. In an age given up to little rivalries, men are apt to judge each other by the length they run along one narrow line, or the dust they raise in the race. That very comprehensiveness, variety of interest, and magnanimity which ought to have exalted, will continue to obscure the fame of one of the age's most conspicuous ornaments. Those who said that my father was an artist rather than a man of science, forgot in how many branches of science he was eminent. Among the mathematicians of the time he has only one successor; in natural philosophy, history—ancient and modern—in geology, and among the speculations of social science, he was almost equally at home. He had not that predominance of the creative faculty which constitutes an artist, but he understood everything and sympathized with all that he understood. French was the only language beside his own of which he was an absolute master; but he knew enough of the classics to catch their spirit, and to appreciate the inquiries in which their works have been the guides, and he knew more than enough of Germany to make himself familiar with her reveries. Those who called him an idealist were ignorant of the broad basis of common-sense which lay at the foundation of all he did or thought, and the intense practical bias which made him seem to me not unfrequently to err on

the other side, the side of men of the world. When a question of policy arose between the advocacy of an abstract good and the receiving of a more palpable though more partial advantage, there was a gulf between my father and men like Joseph Mazzini and John Mill; to which I was more fully alive because, on such occasions, my own sympathies lay, and lie still, with them rather than with him. In politics he was a temperate radical, verging, about the close of his life, towards becoming a whig. In religion he thought for himself, and, of course, arrived at his own conclusions. In the domain of art and science he was a man of culture; like Goethe, though on a somewhat smaller scale, *totus teres atque rotundus*. There was nothing mean about my father, no little vanity, no spite, no jealousy. He knew how to live down the rancour of others, to forgive and forget the most malignant injuries. But he was proud, and his will, weak on the one side, was imperious on the other.

Generous beyond the point of prudence, and sanguine of impossible things, he had too little perseverance to lay the foundation of even the most practicable of his distant dreams. Easily depressed by a failure, he was as easily elated by success, and while he protested against my want of equanimity, he was ruffled by small accidents to a degree that seemed inconsistent with his dignity. A purer man never lived, a more unselfish one seldom, a more affectionate one very rarely. Forgetting all the shadows that sometimes came between us, I love to think of him as he was when everything he thought was noble, and everything he said was inspiring, and everything he did was majestic. . . .

The happiest inspirations of some of the ancient masters have revealed to our senses a beauty belonging more to heaven than earth. I can understand the ecstasy, the reverie of holy aspirations, and the reverent worship which are aroused in the hearts of good Catholics, when they look up, as the organ sounds, to the blessed features, and realize in that regard the ideal of female perfection; for those old pictures bring back to me something of the feelings with which I used to regard my mother. Let us

fancy her, too, sitting by that fireside with my father, following his voice and interpreting, as none other could, the hidden thoughts that guided its modulations. She had only a share of his intellectual power; her mind, much more subtle than that of most women, seemed sometimes to lack material to work upon; for she was withdrawn at an early age from the genial tasks that compose a lady's education to the sterner duties of life. Her weak health afterwards combined with other occupations to prevent her from becoming an extensive reader. Her knowledge of history and science was only above that generally possessed by wives of learned men, and her power of language was limited. She had a passion for poetry which led her to become familiar with all the master-pieces of English verse, and a fine discrimination, which enabled her to assign to each its proper rank. She could paint well and sing sweetly; but instrumental music was the only art in which she showed anything like genius. She did not care for the flatteries of society, and had she tried to shine in conversation it is probable she would have failed; but I never knew a better critic of men. She seemed, because she felt, cold to strangers, and they did not know how accurately she was taking their measure. People often came to see us, and went away fascinated with my father's grace and brilliancy, without having ever appreciated my mother's stronger, though quieter, character. She was different from him in many ways; her pride, less lofty but more consistent, would not allow her to appear gracious to those whom she disliked; she was too fond of independence to interchange many favours, or incur any unnecessary debts. She desired "to look the broad world in the face and owe not any man." The warmest of friends, she held fast every heart she won, but she was ready to distrust professions, and not very ready to forgive real injuries; no one was ever better fitted to correct the errors of an over-sanguine judgment by her own. More wise than clever, she gave me more sage advice than I have ever seen in books, and all I have seen of life has only served to confirm its excellence. One of the best and greatest of those who have ever, in

storm and sunshine, toiled through the earth, she ever seemed less than she was. My father spoke at times scornfully of the world; but in his happier hours it "came out a perfect round," and hope made it seem rich in glorious promises. She saw it just as it was, rather a cloudy land; but her anchorage was firm beyond it. It seemed to me as if my father had power to see all the stars; but my mother alone could hear the music they made. His speech was melodious, like silver; but her silence was like gold, and when she spoke, her noble words were clenched by noble deeds. She said to me, "Be faithful," and lived like an emblem of Faith; "Be loving," and her love was deep as the sea; "Be true," and she was true as the eternal stars.

The laughing child that I did not understand, the girl who lightened my sorrows by sharing them, the woman of whom I am so proud, meet in the one reality—my sister. At the time of which I write, she had not shown herself, or rather she was a sort of aery chrysalis not yet entered into life. I had many faults to find, in my blind impatience, with one whom I can write little of now, simply because she has lost them all, or I have lost the power to see them. She seemed restless, and frivolous, and peevish at times; but even then she seemed a creature full of affection, and open to all beautiful inspirations. It was long before she could be taught to read at all; still later before she could be persuaded to run through a serious book. I was happy when I had persuaded her to finish even a faery tale. My father despaired of her progress, and I joined in lamenting that she was likely to do us so little credit. Foolish! both. Neither the sage nor the little bookworm knew that the child, who flew like a butterfly from flower to flower, was gathering, from nature and love, lessons "more true and deep" than any the one could teach or the other learn. . . .

I heard a bark. Is that Nell's bay? Not yet; it is the Newfoundland, Austen, who fawns upon us. Were our dogs not a part of our family? Austen was the first I remember; a big, shaggy brute, who kept a valiant watch, but grew morose after he had passed the meridian of life,

and had to be banished. His temper was always unforgiving. I remember on one occasion he nearly killed a dog that had offended him in Partick a full week before; but his great offence was the foul murder of a favourite cat, who was nursing her kitten, and sat over it rather than escape. Her kitten, fed carefully on spoon food, lived to avenge her. Bill, preserved in infancy by his mother's blood, saved in boyhood by speed of climbing and height of tall fir-tree, or length of telescope-tube, became at once the most intelligent, the most affectionate, the most valiant of all his great though slandered race. He knew every word that was said to him; he screamed through the house for weeks when his friends left it; he came down daily to meet me on my return from school. Beloved creature, how tenderly you rubbed your sides against my legs! He chased every cat and dog in the neighbourhood out of their senses, and fell at last fighting, I doubt not like Horatius of old, "in facing fearful odds" for some great cause. Poor Otto, Austen's successor, how you fled from Bill's great claws! graceful Otto, how you rushed and sprang on me with your exquisite white arms! ingenious Otto, how you dug your stake from the deep soil, with those paws and that long nose of yours, running away continually till we could keep you no longer! Mad Pluto followed—an Irish importation. Pluto foamed, broke his chain, and for aught I know may to this day be spreading hydrophobia through the country.

If a noble soul ever beat in a noble frame, it was in yours, Clyde. You gave me many a chase when you were young, but I have loved few men more. Great honest brute! I cannot believe that all that is left of so much valour, so much devotion, so much majesty, lies under that neglected mound. Hecate, too, my beautiful brown bitch, who would follow me all round those walks, whom I would have taken with me round the world, your death, untimely, threw the first gloom over our home during the last summer we were to meet within its walls as a family.

BAGNÈRES DE BIGORRE, June 10th.

I forget what month of 1845 it was when we set sail for Ireland; but I remember waking in the morning, and walking on deck, and finding the waves high, and getting drenched with a storm of rain, and coming down to the cabin, and getting a taste of sea-sickness, and being very glad when we got into the calm waters of Belfast harbour. We rushed quickly through that dingy town, and drove to Drogheda in haste to catch the train for Dublin; it only reached so far in those days. I had my first glimpse of the Emerald Isle, and my earliest view of Irish life; but there are only broken fragments of the journey in my mind; the rushing car, the brogue and wit of the driver who was to get more money if he caught the train, and, of course, managed to get the money though he missed the train; the fields greener than any I had dreamt of before, and the bustle of the river at Drogheda. "Memory remembers not" our flight through Dublin, or the journey from thence to Waterford. From Waterford we had an exquisite drive through the Vale of Avoca to Cork, where my father arrived just in time to deliver his lectures. I went with the rest of the crowded audience to be stirred like them by those models of clear demonstration, and roused by those impassioned bursts of eloquence. Cork had its parties like other places ready to cut each other's throats; everything that befell was food to one or both. I recollect my father's anger at a furious Orange paper that exaggerated a passage from his lecture on 'Galileo' into an attack on 'Popery.' The lecturer, it wrote, denounced in glowing terms the horrors of the Inquisition: now the lecturer had done nothing of the kind, and had, I thought, rather gone out of his way to avoid it; but the Orange editor could imagine as well as report. Yet Cork is a pleasant place, and there are pleasant people to be met with in and about it. We stayed in the town about a month; if we go there together, I shall certainly be able to find our lodgings; just where a little street runs into a great one opposite a hatter's shop, whose huge, staring sign

FOGARTY

became as familiar to me as our friend's

HOTEL D'ANGLETERRE

TENU PAR CAMPAGNE

was to us from our little window at Biarritz.

Our residence was enlivened by our acquaintance—which in some instances deepened into friendship—with two or three intelligent families, and by the variety afforded by some events, a few of which are worth recalling. Our first evening was spent in the house of the secretary of the institution for which my father lectured, Mr. Keeling, a worthy middle-aged gentleman, whose main defect was an inveterate habit of punning, and a partiality for his own jokes which made him lead the laugh a little too loudly. He lived there with his sister and two nieces, the Miss Skillins, who played like two pretty sunbeams about the house. I used to call and play chess with them often, after that first evening when we sat together round the table, and discussed politics and poetry, and the *Wandering Jew*, over almonds and raisins. Mariana was there, the fair brunette, and Susan, the beautiful blonde; and many a day they sailed with us about the summer waters of Cove and Monkstown, or up the course of the river which ran in lake after lake among the green hills; or drove in cars away to some sunny retreat of the shore, where we sat and made a pic-nic party and endless fun. Old A. used to be with us, the oldest of antiquarians, who electrified himself into a long life, and was credulous enough to believe any marvel. The Jenningses too would often join us, a still more entertaining family. There was Tom, the master of the house, with his great strong head and hands, and Edward, a pair of brothers like the Thorntons of "North and South."[1] Mrs. Jennings was rather a stiff old lady, and her daughter Mary seemed cast in the same rough sterling mould, but Jane, my mother's own peculiar friend, added to their warm-heartedness the versatility of a more imaginative temper. She was as fond of mesmerism as M'C. was of phrenology, and it played her as many tricks.

[1] He is evidently referring to the Moores in *Shirley*.

I remember her and my mother sitting opposite to each other for hours, till Jane gave in and confessed that she was being overcome by the very sleep she had hoped to induce in her obstinate patient. I remember too seeing some of the pranks of her inspired clairvoyante, who afterwards turned out to be a clever impostor, so that when the good lady ceased to be her dupe, it was at the cost of half her faith. There too were often to be seen Mr. Hincks, the talented young clergyman and his pretty sister, whom I fell in love with and used to torment; pulling her long black ringlets under pretence that I meant to ring the bell, and mistook the handle in my confusion. There were other girls—every traveller will tell you the women of Cork are fascinating—whose smiles made me happy, and whose absence made me miserable. But our favourites of all were the M'Swineys, Mr. and Mrs., and their charming sister Alicia. Mr. M'Swiney was a great iron merchant in Cork, a devout Catholic, and one of the most excellent men I have ever known. Acute, upright, straightforward, gentle, and generous, he lived respected, and died lamented by all who ever knew him. Mrs. M'Swiney was just as kind and generous as her husband, whom she loved as he deserved to be loved. Her sister lived with them like a daughter; for they had no other family. Alicia Haynes was introduced to my father after his first lecture, and soon attracted his notice as one of the most intelligent girls he had ever met. She would have been good-looking had she not worn blue spectacles to protect her weak eyes; but you soon forgot the spectacles when you found yourself in the company of an Irish Aspasia; even at that early age she was a literary lady in all respects but that of authorship, for she had read in English, French, and German, enough to give her thoughts for a lifetime. You have met Anna Deborah Richardson; she and Miss Haynes are similar; their talk and their criticism is of the same high order, only you must add to the latter the charm of music.

I am blending earlier and later memories, for when I revisited Cork four summers ago I met her again, a young girl no longer, but a woman saddened by the sorrow of which twelve years had brought her a store, yet

with the old enthusiasm mellowed by experience, and enlarged by a still wider culture. Most of the others came round us more or less changed, the M'Swineys much as they used to be, and the Jenningses, Tom, and Mary, and Jane, whose eyes seemed to want their brightness as she missed her old friend, my mother.

At this time, and for many years after, I was a resolute teetotaler. I was accordingly very enthusiastic when I was introduced to Father Mathew, and found him ready to welcome and to confirm my faith. He treated me with extreme kindness, presented me with a silver medal and a sash, and requested me to accompany a great procession of the abstainers of the south of Ireland which was about to take place. I have never repented my weary walk that dusty summer's day, amid the confusion of flags and drums, for I helped to swell the triumph of a good cause, and do honour to the worthy man who led it. I saw a great deal of Father Mathew: in his little room, where there were strange scenes enacted, as wretches, half dead with whisky, came crawling to take the pledge as a sort of absolution; on the platform, whence he sent his powerful voice far over the stormy crowd; in the quiet convent, with his quiet nuns, when their voices chimed in with the organ to vesper tunes. In all attitudes he seemed to me a thoroughly sincere man, working out with honest, though perhaps excessive, zeal, the beneficent purpose to which he devoted a munificent life. Simple, unaffected, frank, and generous, if he missed being a great man he missed it very narrowly. As to the question itself, I think now, though more dispassionately, much as I thought then. Total abstinence is necessary to the well-being of some, it will do good to many, and harm to very few. Let each take his own way, remembering that it is impossible for any one who has been the victim of intemperance ever to become a moderate drinker, and that example is better than precept.

From Cork we went for a fortnight to Dr. Barter's hydropathic establishment at Blarney. Never was there a sweeter spot than that where the little haven, since grown into larger proportions, was reared. On the end of the groves, almost

within sight of the famous castle, it stands on a gentle slope from which runs a rivulet through a perfect faery land of foliage. Here we lived, and bathed and wandered by rock and stream and dell: reading Gerald Griffin's poems, going on pic-nic parties under the trees, making the woods melodious with notes that mocked the singing of the birds: golden days, so full of health and hope, came back to me like echoes when I trod those walks again, and found them sad because they had been sweet.

We returned to town again when it was alive with a great excitement: flags flaunted from every window, bands "with banner and bugle and fife" marched through the streets. Dan O'Connell was free, and was coming in triumph to Cork. From the balcony of Mr. Keeling's window we sat and watched the great procession as it came winding mile after mile along, with all the emblems of all the trades: the tailors with their Adam and Eve, and the shoemakers prouder of King Cophetua's car; with all the arms of all the cities; with all the sound and show that Repeal could muster: and it seemed as if it would never be done, till a shouting rent the sky, and the street grew dense with heads, as the car of the Irish Conqueror bore him along in triumph, and swayed to and fro in the surge of all Ireland pressing to hail it. I have seen plenty of processions since, but never one like that: if this was not an honest man, he at least knew how to set a nation on fire. It is my last memory of Ireland in 1845, unless it be the image of Miss Haynes watching from the pier the vessel which bore my mother and me on our way homeward bound.

There was some thought of sending me to school again in the autumn of 1845 after we returned, but I fell ill of a gastric fever which made my friends decide against the project, and I was left to pursue my studies much as inclination directed me. I was cured of this illness by hydropathy, which proved itself powerful against fever. I recovered rapidly and took to reading, in a desultory way, large numbers of books, of which novels and poetry made up a considerable proportion. Innocently enough in one way, but to the peril of my common sense

and the waste of my time, I ran through almost the whole works of Eugène Sue and Alexander Dumas. The thrilling scenes and deep laid plots, and rapid events of the *Mysteries of Paris*, and the *Wandering Jew*, and the *Count of Monte Christo*, and *Matilda*, and the *Commander of Malta*, and the *Isle of France*, and the *Queen's Maids*, and the *Three Musketeers*, and others whose names would fill a page, filled my head with a set of new characters and fancies. I lived half my life in a world of unhealthy, because unreal romance, and had such a surfeit of novels that I fell sick of them and turned to history and poetry, and light literature of a higher stamp. I read through Scott's *Napoleon*, studying the battles carefully on the map, a possession which I was proud of when I had acquired it, and which I have never entirely lost. I read more poetry; the more abstract parts of Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey*, the *Ode*, *Intimations of Immortality*, and *The Excursion*; Milton, the whole; Mrs. Browning, then Miss Barrett, and the minor poems of Tennyson; the first reading of *Locksley Hall* is not a thing to be forgotten. I dipped into the prose poetry of Germany, and read in translations considerable portions of Richter and Schiller, including in particular the *Autobiography of Jean Paul*, *The Death of an Angel*, and other pieces; these with my mother—*The Robbers*, *Don Carlos*, *The Bride of Messina*, *William Tell*, and *Mary Stuart*. I was beginning to take a delight in plays written and acted; and no reward that could be offered me was so great as being taken to the theatre, on some night when Miss Faucit was going to act Imogen, or Ariadne, or Mrs. Haller; when Miss Cushman was Lady Macbeth, or Mr. Macready was to appear as Richelieu. This was a reward my father gave me now and then; my mother did not like my going so often as I began to do; it seemed like a dangerous passion, and she used to tempt me to stay at home by offering to play to me alone some piece of glorious German music: a sonata of Beethoven, or an act of Don Giovanni, an oratorio of Haydn, or some of Mendelssohn's songs. Perhaps she had rather an extreme aversion to the theatre, but it went along with a sort of repugnance to gas-light and tinsel, and false excitement of all sorts; she bade me seek my inspiration from the

hillsides and the morning air, from noble books and self-renunciation.

During the session of 1845-46 I attended the class of Natural History in the University. To good Dr. William Cowper, antiquated and absurd as he was in his manner, and limited as his knowledge of geology must have been, I owe my introduction to the first science which I studied with anything like zeal or success. His introductory lectures on mineralogy were excellent, and I acquired during my attendance on them a certain amount of skill in the inspection of crystals and precious stones. My notes on the atomic theory and the description of the most important minerals, still remain to show with how much attention I followed his old-fashioned dissertations. One morning, it was rumoured, some years before, he had come into the class room with tears in his eyes, and said he had been obliged to give up the Wernerian theory of the formation of the rocks. This was long after Hutton's discovery in Glen Tilt had, in the eyes of all intelligent geologists, decided the question in his favour, and may serve as an indication of the extent to which the worthy doctor had gone along with the more recent speculations of the science which he professed to teach. Still he made his theme interesting, and set my mind working on a track along which, with the help of my father's additional instruction and encouragement, I advanced for a considerable distance, and might, had circumstances permitted, have advanced still further. I read through Bakewell and Mantell and Ansted, and studied Lyell, and revised the *Gallery of Nature*, and pored over maps and models, and began to break stones as I went along the road, and to examine with a critical eye the specimens my father had accumulated, in order to arrange and catalogue them. I wrote two long essays, one on "Meteoric Stones," the other on the "Glacier and Diluvial Theories," for the class, and made a list of all the crystals in the museum. A prize was offered for this work and for the essays, and I was ridiculously sulky because I did not get one of them, in competition with men twice my age; but I was rewarded by my father's delight at my new ambition. During the two following summers my ardour did not slacken. I was presented

with a fine set of hammers, and carried them with me everywhere. My old friend, James Thomson, was ready to aid me in the formation of the cabinet, which remains as the solid result of my labours, and reinforced with granites from Norway, and shells from the Isle of Wight, and lava and pumice from Auvergne and the Rhine, it grew to what it is—one of the most complete collections of certain classes of rock that I have seen. I showed so much enthusiasm and so much perseverance in the first study I had found really congenial, the science both in its practical and speculative side allured me so strongly, that my father was willing to depart from the plan he had formed regarding me, and went the length of suggesting to his old friend, Andrew Ramsay, that I might be glad if he could find for me some situation in connection with the geological survey. The answer was that none were likely to be vacant for a considerable time, and the scheme was abandoned. A turn of the scale the other way, and I might have been at this moment hammering about hills, hale and strong, and sinking shafts, and drawing up reports about coal and iron.

My father introduced me to Euclid, and soon thought he had discovered that I had no aptitude for mathematics, because I crept where he flew. Under more patient hands, I afterwards acquired, with average facility, more than the average amount of knowledge in that science. It was very easy for me to take the first place in my class at College, but my father was never shaken in his early impression, which, judging by a high standard, I believe to have been a correct one. I got Euclid at my fingers' ends, and mastered equations, plane, and some branches of spherical trigonometry, and conic sections, and the binomial theorem, and dipped with interest into analytical geometry, and acquired considerable facility in working out the problems within the range of those elementary branches ; but I knew very little of the calculus, and nothing of many of those infinitely complex operations in which every scientific astronomer is continually involved. I knew the instruments at the Observatory, their uses, and the way to use them. I knew my father's books, and attended many courses of his

lectures, popular and scientific. I was familiar with most of those facts and theories concerning the earth, and moon, and stars, which a large audience came to learn, for twenty successive weeks, in the Merchants' Hall. Without that power which could at will arrest and make wonder the eyes of his hearers; without that grace which gave to his speaking the charm of a perfect actor; without that fire of eloquence which raised me into another world every time I heard it, I could have delivered most, as I was once constrained to deliver one, of my father's lectures to a disappointed audience. I could follow the minute explanation of the planetary perturbation which one winter drove most of his students away, while Jack and Smith and I sat taking notes. But I never was, and it may be questioned if I was capable of becoming, an astronomer. I only knew enough of the science to know its difficulty, and had attained but the first step of wisdom in arriving at a due sense of my ignorance. Yet many a glorious night we spent together in that dome watching the shadows creep up the sides of Tycho, straining our sight to see the fields under the Apennines green as with waving corn; marking the changes in an aery comet, or the steadfast glories of the Lyre; watching the Pleiades, "like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid," the snows gathering about the poles of the red planet Mars, or the winds blowing across the belt of Jupiter; or gazing till our eyes grew dim on the fathomless abysses of Orion blazing from a past eternity on the world. Many a night when the clouds came chasing over the sky have I walked with him on that roof, while the furnace fires were looming over heaven, and the lights of the city seemed to dazzle the distance, while pacing to and fro till Hesperus brightened through the rifts of rain, we have felt our hearts drawn together and our souls raised upward by the stars.[1]

[1] For a poetical expression of the feelings with which this letter concludes, see the verses "From the Old Home," in *The Death of Themistocles and other Poems*" (MacLehose, 1881).

BAGNÈRES DE BIGORRE, June 12.

This work is hanging on my hands, and I must not linger in its accomplishment; but I am tired to-night, and I will ask you to accept a couple of pages instead of a long letter. It will suffice if I content myself with narrating, instead of attempting to describe, the events of the following year. In the autumn of 1846 I was sent back to the Western Academy, which, conducted by new masters and under a new regime, was struggling too late to retrieve its ruined fortunes. Nelson had been supplanted by a Mr. Middleton, a pleasant, shrewd man of the world, a good scholar and able teacher, who used, in the hours of recreation, to give some of his senior students lessons in fencing without losing any of the dignity which was natural to him, and always insured respect. Gregg had yielded to Charles William Connon, a man of remarkable acuteness and power, who gave promise of more distinction than circumstances—mainly the pressure of a large family—have enabled him to attain. If any one could have saved the Western Academy, Connon could. He was already known as the author of the best English grammar I have ever seen, and he taught as clearly and as well as he wrote. He was a scholar and a gentleman; his strong Aberdonian accent did not mar the effect of a manner which fitly expressed the underlying emotions and energetic will of a strong mind. To a knowledge of Latin, French, and German, far above the average of that possessed by professing teachers, he added a familiarity with the best authors of his own tongue whether in verse or prose, which excited the admiration of all who were able to test it. In literature he had an excellent taste; in life a little more polish might have added to his power. In school I learnt more English from him than from any other; at home, both at the Observatory, where he was a frequent visitor, and in his own house, where I was boarded for a fortnight during the absence of my family, I learnt at least as much in lessons of good sense and tact.

Middleton had meanwhile been dragging me over the coals in Latin. I had returned after my illness almost

entirely ignorant of the rudiments, and had to begin grounding myself in it again. I felt ill at ease when I turned back from Plautus and Juvenal to Cornelius Nepos and Adam's grammar. I did not take kindly to the work, and my progress was as slow as my task was painful. Meanwhile the younger Gregg, who, along with Slack, was retained to remind me of former times, once more essayed the difficult problem of teaching me to write. I have often thought that some strange mixture of incapacity and perversity made it impossible for me to be taught anything. Teacher after teacher, year after year, was employed to instruct me in English, Latin, Greek, writing, and dancing, and one after another they gave up the effort in despair. My better genius came to me by the side of my solitary desk, and by degrees I came to read Tacitus and Plato, to write, to dance, and to compose pretty tolerably. Old Körner, who, with his military manners and humour and manly brusqueness, continues to carry my good wishes, was my first teacher in German, and there, too, I staggered along step by step. My father did not send me to Detruc or Havet, for he said I would pick up French afterwards, by force of circumstances. Unfortunately for me Middleton left before the year was over, and I was handed over to Connon to try his patience on Virgil which I translated freely, and Mair's exercises which I mangled sadly. Good man, I remember his quite losing his temper over a paper I brought him one day with the sentence, "Syria vastatus est." "If you ever go to college," I hear him exclaiming, "if you ever go to college, don't tell them I taught you." As it turned out, I may be permitted to doubt if the information would have done much harm to Mr. Connon: but I did him little credit in those days.

I meant to tell you more about my walks out from school that year, and how I used to meet Lushington, and had a long discussion with De Quincey, that wonderful old man, whose wanderings and mishaps during his residence with us will serve for a separate episode.[1] I am resolved to finish this epoch with my two pages. About this time

[1] There is unfortunately no further reference in these pages to De Quincey's visits to the Observatory.

my grandmother died and other clouds gathered around us. My father began to despair of me. The Western Academy had failed. When Connon had left there was no hope there. As a last resort he bethought himself of his old friend, Mr. Fergusson of Kelso; and thither I was sent away to breathe for a year the atmosphere of a strange land, and fight my way alone in the outer world.

BAGNÈRES DE BIGORRE, June 13.

Near the confluence of the Teviot and the Tweed, within hearing of the broad, rushing river, in the very flower of the rich Border land, lies the little town of Kelso. It has many attractions, a good climate, an admirable situation and pleasant streets, a fine square, a green, and the ruins of an old abbey, which, less graceful than Melrose, and less extensive than Dryburgh, has yet the advantage of greater height and more tolerable preservation. There are as many beautiful walks round Kelso as there are near any town I know in Scotland; one may ramble away among the rising grounds between it and Jedburgh, or saunter up the stream to Floors or old Roxburgh Castle, when the sun throws a lazy heat over the luxurious banks, or wander by the side of the waters when they are sparkling beneath the moon, and murmuring melodious music. I came in the coach with my mother in September, 1847, to prove how little external nature can do to make man happy when his fellows will not leave him alone in her society. I came to pass the most miserable—thank Heaven it was the last—of the miserable years of my school time.

There is one association connected with my memory of Kelso which I like to return to, but it stands alone. My teacher, Mr. Fergusson, was one of the most excellent men who ever lived in this world, and passed away from it comparatively unknown. A good Latin and Greek, and a profound German scholar, he carried about with him, on matters of history and physical geography, learning enough to have endowed two professors' chairs. To this he added a genius for teaching, and an amount of zeal which lost itself in the barbarian swamp of that picturesque, but un-

civilized, little town. The qualities of his mind which were called into exercise in the Grammar School of Kelso were more closely connected with his character than his intellect; promptitude, accuracy, and decision of a will almost savage in its energy—these were required to constrain the attention and quell the turbulence of his "young barbarians" of the Border. There was no room here for that large and liberal growth of thought which showed itself to my father and a few choice friends,[1] still less for any gush from that well of tenderness, which I afterwards found lying deep and calm beneath his ferocity. John Fergusson was known to all the neighbourhood as a man of sterling worth, of rigid integrity, and manly strength. Whether he had any of those womanly virtues which are required to make a man perfect, nobody knew where nobody could appreciate them; whether his thoughts on those mysteries which lie round our life were deep or shallow no one cared to ask, for they had never puzzled themselves with questions which they were incapable of understanding. Fergusson might be a bad man at bottom (it was remarked that he read German books on Sundays), but he could compel the stupidest boy to learn something, and he could tame the wildest; so in his own house he got the stupidest and wildest to teach and tame. When I think of such a noble life so employed, it seems to me even a sadder thing than the sight of one of the most graceful scholars of the day, drilling his ragged squad in the alphabet and primer, at the Grammar School of Govan.

The kindness with which Fergusson treated me, and it was generally extreme, stood alone, and unfortunately some of my defects were those which he was the least disposed to regard with indulgence. I was intellectually inaccurate, he was the reverse. I was disposed to be sentimental in my tastes, he despised sentiment. I was unsocial in my habits, he thought that one of man's first duties in life was to learn to associate with his fellows in every sphere; and he did not see how completely I had fallen out of my sphere. Add to this that I was reserved, timid, and bore malice, whereas he was frank and bold, and resented

[1] Mr. Fergusson was a friend and correspondent of Carlyle's.

every injury at the moment; that I was weak and he was strong; and you will believe that even his kindness was often tried by my moodiness and eccentricity, that his great, grey, hollow eyes flashed now and then with something like contempt on the boy who, as he phrased it, wished to go through life tied to his mother's apron-strings. Perhaps he did not always know how to deal with a nature so peculiar, and yet he treated me in a peculiar way, and the only happy hours I ever spent in Kelso, besides those when I stole out steathily to wander by the river-side, were those which I used to spend every evening alone with my master in his study. If he ever acted unjustly towards me, it was because he was misled by a credulity which was frequently imposed upon. Mr. Fergusson was unfortunately unmarried, and the internal care of his establishment devolved to some extent on his housekeeper. Again I am restrained, by thoughts that ought to lay many enmities, from saying all I think about this woman. She and her master are alike beyond the reach of criticism; his truth, his integrity, his noble-mindedness, are covered by the same mould which buries her meanness and malice, and ought to bury their memory. His partiality was the only cause I could assign for her hatred of me: she told the other boys that I was a parlour boarder; that I was a "gowk" whom Mr. Fergusson was obliged to pet because my father insisted upon it; that I looked down upon them because they were farmers, not good enough to associate with a professor's son.

I remember as it were yesterday one day after dinner, when I had given vent to some uncontrollable smiles, called forth by some absurd remark of the old lady's, and more absurd gesture of a senior boarder who had found out my weakness for humour and played upon it, Fergusson bade me wait when all were gone, and poured upon me a torrent of invective the more intense that he hesitated to let it find its usual relief in the lash. Mrs. T. was pacing the room in triumph as he was accusing me of perversity and thanklessness, while I stood with my hand on the door with thoughts too bitter for tears, saying to myself,—even he is turned against me.

The temptations of a large day school are limited, and with them we must be prepared to encounter and live down in after life. There good boys grow up into the [illegible] and the brutal ones, who have ceased to [illegible] laugh before our faces, only cheat us, and [illegible] our backs. But there is no limit to the [illegible] that may be inflicted upon a sensitive child in a [illegible] school.

[illegible] went back to visit my master at Kelso at the [illegible] with the weight of ten years later on [illegible] saw the inmates of that time pass from the [illegible] to the playground. I wondered how ten years [illegible] have been such a martyr to beings so [illegible] It was impossible to conceive of myself [illegible] there is the most painful of [illegible] that of a mind obliged to wrestle with a crowd [illegible] We worked, we played, we walked [illegible] it was, at play in the room where we [illegible] the hall where we studied. I was equally alone. [illegible] fellow-sufferers who were surely unfortunate [illegible] in that exceptional school, there was not [illegible] but one who would give me a word of [illegible] The hated me because I was petted, [illegible] was admitted and refined, because I knew more; [illegible] me because I was unlike them. [illegible] promised me that he would protect me [illegible] but that I must hold my own [illegible] the smaller ones. He did not know how they [illegible] against the one unhappy object of [illegible] was to contend against numbers from [illegible] promised to protect the [illegible] how the smallest was [illegible] from detection when he [illegible] against every man's, [illegible] against mine. The only thing [illegible] upon them is their inveterate [illegible] the playground, or in the house, [illegible] was neglected to make [illegible] in the class, where I was [illegible] against the miseries of my previous educa-

tion, there was a smile of satisfaction on every face; if I got to the top, an event which became frequent towards the close of the year, every one was ready to sacrifice his own interest to get me down again. If I won a game, it spoiled the pleasure of the sport. If I had a favourite toy, some one would break it. If I was known to love a solitary walk, another would intrude upon it. My work was ridiculed, my rest broken, my favourite books smeared with grease in my absence. The most cowardly boy was goaded by promises of reward and impunity to insult me.

Mrs. T. said I was always fighting: in truth I ought to have fought much oftener, but when I did, it was always against odds. I cannot dwell on the details of a brutality which left me with a feeling of hatred, that it is even now difficult for me to overcome. But I will tell you one incident which will save me from the charge of exaggeration, and which, with numbers similar to it, might be gathered to show that the shield which Mr. Thomas Hughes so much admires has another side. I had often protested against bird-nesting, and when alone in my company some of the boys had affected to feel the force of my arguments; but they conspired to read me a lesson which should kill or cure my mawkishness. One day I was sitting alone—how delightful it was to be alone!—in the school-room, reading one of the *Border Tales*, when the boarders entered to show me of what stuff some of those Border bandits whom I was apt to admire were made. They had with them several bags which they brought into the room, locking the door and taking the key as they entered. They opened the bags, which were full of young birds newly fledged,—these, while they were fluttering about the walls of the room, they battered to death one by one with their satchels, and shaking the mutilated fragments in my face, passed out with shouts of laughter, to dissipate all morbid thoughts in the exhilaration of some other manly sport.

The actors in those scenes would have laughed at strong words used to characterize their deeds, and I need not use them now: but, you ask, where was our master's vigilance at the time? I never saw anything objectionable done in his presence, but he relegated us, during the greater part

of the day, to the care of his assistant, a young man who was preparing to be a clergyman, and did not trouble himself much about our muscular Christianity. Mr. Fergusson liked to sit, after school hours were over, in his own study, and write at his translation of Von Roon. When any misdeeds came to his ears—if any of the boarders were caught smoking, or being out after hours, or breaking into gardens—he punished them with the tawse or dog whip; but it was more difficult for him to make those discoveries when the culprits were bound together by the league of self-defence which unites most schoolboys. It is a good custom never to tell tales out of school, but I would not consent, as the others had done, to perjure myself by declarations of ignorance when I could not evade inquiry, and this was another source of heart-burning and persecution.

Among the scholars of the day school there were some kinder spirits, as dear old Billy Graham, who took my part and gave me encouragement; but the greater number of them were like rude people speaking a strange tongue, who laugh at us because they cannot laugh with us. My little peculiarities irritated them, my teetotalism, which I would not have surrendered for all the persecutions of all the schools in England, was a source of incessant ridicule. I remember well on the day when we were for the last time all assembled together, and Mrs. T. had served out to each of us a glass of whisky toddy, how one of the boarders rose and said, "Good health to you all but teetotal John." I have hated to be called by my first name ever since the liberties they took with it. This was the last stab, and it rankled in my heart long after I had bidden adieu to that wild crew. I went away at the end of the year with a fair knowledge of Latin, mathematics, geography, and German, with an esteem for my master which time could only strengthen, and a spirit still unbroken—for the trials of the year, which had taken from me all peace and good-will, could not shake my love of truth, nor my contempt for those who were mortified because they could not shake it. I had gained wisdom by that bitter knowledge of the world, but I had lost much of the innocence which I brought with me from home, and I carried away with me

feelings of hostility which ran sour in the current of my blood for long years. Richter says somewhere, "Every man when he thinks of his mother ought to feel that all women are sacred." The thought of those school-mates of mine has made all school-boys hateful.[1]

BAGNÈRES DE BIGORRE, June 15.

I came home—home, word so full of tenderness, reality so full of love, a dwelling-place, a rest where cluster the associations of many years, a sound that is so often "sad, because it hath been sweet." I came from Kelso to the Observatory, never to quit it for so long again until I left it for ever. In my notes of the period, for my journal had started the fancy of making notes, I find the record of a number of visitors whose company enlivened still more the first weeks of my return. There was Mrs. Thomson, my kind friend from Haymount, with her daughter Robina, whose poetical fame had reached my ears without our being able to meet. She was not a beauty, but a pleasant, intellectual girl, who read a great deal and wrote verses.

My own first attempt in this direction was in the shape of some lines which I had written on my father's return from America where he had been lecturing during my year at Kelso; they were said to be promising, but not equal to Robina's. She has since married without becoming a poetess. Before the summer was over—that summer spent in joyful idleness—Mr. Fergusson came to see us and inquire about my plans. The awful question about my return was being agitated; should I go back to Kelso or should I go to College? I was taken to Ramsay, and examined by him for the first time. "He will be," he answered, "in the middle of my junior class." The affair looked ominous; if I went back to the Tweed-side I wished to go and get regular lessons in boxing; but

[1] This letter concludes with extracts from a journal kept by Mr. Nichol while at school at Kelso. Some of these are sufficiently remarkable as coming from the pen of a boy of fourteen, but they are, for the most part, the record of the daily details and distresses of school-boy life, and, as such, it would be superfluous to present them to the public.

that too seemed absurd. I entreated to be allowed to go to College. I would try and get above the middle of the class. I suspect what decided the question was Mr. Fergusson himself. He was willing that I should come back to him, or stay, as was thought advisable; he rather thought I should come back, but there was one point on which he had made up his mind. Mr. Fergusson was as proud as Don Quixote, whose figure he recalled to life again: if he thought people were disposed to slight him he got very angry. Something had occurred before the end of the Kelso session, to make my father doubt if he could come to the examination as he had promised to do; upon which my master wrote that if he did not come, his, Fergusson's shadow, which was certainly the longest and thinnest I ever saw, would never again darken the door of the Observatory. Such a command was imperative; my father came.

But his pride took other forms, which reminded one of that type of chivalry in his most generous aspirations. When the time came for paying my board and teaching, Fergusson declared that he would not take a *sou*, that he would take it as an insult if another word was said on the subject. There was no moving him from a determination which he seemed to have formed from the first; all we could do was to give him as many maps and books as he would take, and of course I could not be sent back to Abbey Bank.

My father took counsel with Ramsay as to the best use that could be made of the two months which intervened between then and the opening of the College session, and Ramsay recommended that I should read Latin with Mr. William Fulton, teacher of the Parish School of Govan. Agnes went with me over the water every morning before breakfast during those months, to get some introductory lessons in the language, and when Missy, as the good man called her, had said her lesson, I sat down and read my Tibullus and Ovid. I cannot call Fulton a very good teacher; he was not at any rate the sort of man I most wanted, for though accurate enough himself, he did not contribute much to my accuracy. He would correct

my prose exercises in a lazy way, without explaining the reason of corrections in themselves excellent; he heard me read, and when my translation was inaccurate or inelegant he substituted one of his own, which was a model of elegance, without letting me know whether I had offended against grammar or against taste; often when we came upon a favourite passage, he would anticipate my attempt altogether by his own masterpiece. Afterwards, when Ramsay had finished the drill which Fergusson had begun, and I knew what to expect, and what to seek, from those mornings and evenings at Govan, I gained more from Fulton, as I was longer with him, than from any other teacher. Fulton was a sort of private tutor to me during six whole years of my College course; as regularly as I went to Ramsay and Lushington during the winter, I went to Fulton during the summer, and while he was getting the fee of a village schoolmaster, he took as much interest in me as any Oxford coach can do in his favourite pupil. He taught me to write Latin verses fluently, and to catch the ring of Greek hexameters; he taught me to translate with ease and elegance; during those thousand and one nights while we sat together, he led me up through the range of the classics from Ovid to Plato, and brought me by degrees to love the singers and the sages of Greece and Rome. I read on fast and far myself at last, but if any one else kindled the fire of that enthusiasm it was William Fulton. My walks from the Observatory to Govan were always pleasant; they were to me in the summer what the march to College was in winter; but every time I draw near the ferry now my mind runs back to the autumn of 1848, and the early mornings there with Agnes, when we crossed the river in the great dingy boats, and said our lessons, and went to get the letters from the post, and climbed up the hill together. It was the pleasant time of flowers, the early spring to her, and even then the spring of life to me.

Meanwhile I was busy over English books. My father had brought home a mass of American books, among them a lot of novels, poems, and histories, which I seized upon and read, by stealth or openly according as they

were gay or grave. I remember my delight over Hawthorne and his *Mosses*, a partiality which only grew more intense as my powers of appreciation grew keener. Longfellow had given my father a beautiful copy of his works, and I read those through for the first time. Bryant and Lowell too, pleased me. Among larger works I read almost all Prescott carefully, with maps, and was so much interested in the *Conquest of Mexico* that it took me away from my games with Agnes, which my studies never did. We renewed those games as of old, only as our minds grew, more imagination and, if I may use the expression, more literature entered into them. The show-box was no longer degraded into a coach; it was exalted into a theatre, with its curtain and its scenery. We had elaborate marionettes—for serious and burlesque representations—made of cork and cashou nuts, ridiculous, delightful figures which we christened mannikins. They represented gnomes, ghouls, and elfish spirits of all sorts, and played parts of their own in fantasies. We found it best to keep these entertainments in our own hands, nor do I know any sort of amusement which I have found more attractive than the manufacturing and managing of marionettes.

Dancing, whether it be called a recreation or a task, was part of our employment in those days. We had a class, formed of ourselves and some of the neighbouring families, to be taught in the hall by a neat little lady, Miss Reynolds. Some summers before I went to Kelso, my father came home from Leeds, and astonished us all by an account of a little girl whom he had met there. This little girl played the most difficult music with exquisite taste and marvellous power; she sang with intense feeling and sweetness, read wise books, thought wise thoughts, said pretty things, and looked herself, when she pleased, very fascinatingly pretty. Such intelligence could not fail to rouse our eagerness—mine especially—to see and judge for ourselves of this prodigy. We invited her to come with her mother and spend some weeks at the Observatory and they came. E—— was and did all that was reported. She was clever, almost beautiful; if she had had large eyes she would have been perfectly so;

well read, a good German and French scholar, and at the age of fourteen possessed of many accomplishments, besides a genius for music which was the more admirable that it brought no conceit along with it. You have seen some of little E.'s letters which she continued to write me for whole ten years after this visit. I liked to get them. I doubt if any other handwriting made my heart beat so fast as hers, when I saw it on the mantelpiece of the Kelso dining-room, for I remembered our games, our long days' rambles in the woods, her sweet songs like the birds', her smiles like the sun among the leaves, her tears as she turned away her little head, when I pressed her hand that day we parted, and the midsummer's dream was done. When I came home from Kelso, her parents were settled in Glasgow, and E—— was more fascinating than ever now that the summer of sweet sixteen had added to her bloom, and her passion for music had grown absorbing, without allowing her thirst for more general knowledge to be quenched. They were frequent visitors at the Observatory, and we often went to visit them. E—— and I grew great friends; after she left Glasgow we corresponded with each other during six years.

Dancing has led me to E.; a note which I find about a sermon which I wrote at this time leads me to touch on my religion. Without speculating on the more subtle causes which lead one to adopt this or that form of faith, it will be admitted that we all take our earliest impressions of the world and the way it is ruled, of our duties in it, and of the God who made it and us, from those with whom we are brought into earliest contact; it will be admitted, too, that neither change of circumstance, nor movement of thought, in after life will avail to efface entirely the influence of those impressions—they lie still beneath all things like the memories of early love—we may renounce our old allegiance, the old worship with its forms has a place in our heart whether we recognize it or no. These facts, which all are aware of and many appreciate, should lead to tolerance, and help us to make allowance for differences. I first learnt religion, as most of us learn it, from my mother. Were we taught nothing, it is possible

that some mysterious influences, like those which seem at a great crisis in life to act for us, would sometime compel us to bend the knee in adoration of an unseen power; but we would have no name for that vague impression.

My mother taught me to think of God, and of the good He gave us, and the gratitude we owed Him; she read to me of Him who lived on earth after God's own image, and bade me believe His promises and obey His precepts. This was the sum of my early religion; and it were abundantly enough for us all if we could carry just so much through life with us. But just as when some precious thing grows less and rarer it is covered with ornaments, so our faith, which is so volatile that it threatens to escape as like a vapour, is enclosed and cased round with ceremonies and the details of doctrine. We hold by those, and think that when they are stolen from us by argument or experience all is lost; and all is lost when we have transferred our worship to the crystal vase from the precious flower within it; from the gem to the casket. The doctrines of Presbyterianism, the Scotch ideas of plenary inspiration, Sabbath worship, and other later exaggerations and interpretations, in some measure wove themselves around my primary belief in a celestial city. I became an orthodox, though a mild, Calvinist. We went, my mother and I, from the time when I could follow a sermon, to church regularly on Sundays. Our first clergyman was a Mr. Paisley. I remember him vaguely, an excellent, earnest man of a dark complexion; I always enjoyed his sermons, and never liked to miss them. It was so pleasant, when my mother and I walked up together through the avenue, to discuss together the text and his interpretation of it. I recollect my first thought of scepticism being started by one lecture of a course he was giving on Samuel, when he came to the controversy between the priest and Saul on the subject of the Amalekites, and my admiration went strongly in behalf of the generous king, and my pity was great for Agag. The questions I asked my mother were not carried far, because I found she shared my feeling; and I was left with a vague notion that there were some things in the Old

Testament we could not understand. I have known a good orthodox old lady admit that she would not like to have done as Jael did.

In coming into contact with the speculations of others, still more in studying history, I had found that it was impossible for me to accept a religion on the ground of tradition; the controversial books I read, and those were numerous, as Froude's and Newman's and Greg's, accompanied, rather than directed, the current of my thoughts. I had to seek my way alone, and grope about for faith amid troubled waters, and wander without it in the valley of the shadow of death.[1]

BAGNÈRES, June 16.

On the 1st of November, 1848, I entered the University of Glasgow as a student, full of all manner of confused hopes and ideas, most of which were to be disappointed, many of which were to be realized, some of which were to be surpassed. It was a great step forward; I was brought, in the courts of the College, into contact with life more as it really is. I found there a microcosm of that mixture of characters, and variety of pursuits, and shifting of scenery, which make up the world. It was later, by three or four years, that I came to know the new society, and form an important member of its movement, so I will defer my impressions of Glasgow student life till the beginning of the next epoch of my own. Meanwhile I tried to forget the painful memories of Kelso in association with a few of those whom I met, as active in the field of knowledge, and in every way as good, or better, than myself. Even during the first year of my attendance I had several pleasant companions; students, who begin to feel themselves young men, put off in a great measure the absurdity, the brutality, and the childishness of school-boys. I had no persecutions at Glasgow College, for at first I

[1] There follows in this place a series of descriptive criticisms of the various pastors attended by Nichol during his boyhood. These sketches and criticisms, sometimes laudatory, are always characteristically frank and pungent.

was pleased to know, and afterwards able to lead, my comrades in the classes and out of them.

In the mornings of this my first, and during four other, sessions of attendance on the College, I had to leave home at half-past six in order to arrive in time for my class at half-past seven. It was a fair hour's walk from the Observatory to the College, and it was pitch dark when I started off in the winter, and the ground was sometimes covered thickly with snow. I had to find my way down the hill as best I could, and it was often a difficult matter. Besides securing that I came into the class with open eyes, indeed I was often half-asleep when I left the house, those walks did me a world of good in giving me strength, habits of early rising, and a disposition to defy the weather.

The Junior Latin, to which I came in the mornings, engaged most of my attention this year. The fashion of teaching a class in a Scotch University is something unknown in England. You must fancy from one to two hundred young men ranged together in a large class-room on benches where their places are marked. First the catalogue is called; every one who is present answers "adsum," and those who do not answer have afterwards to give an account of their absence. Then, if it is a lecturing class, the professor delivers his lecture; if not, or if it is an hour for examination, he calls upon one or other of the students to answer questions, read a passage from the lesson appointed, comments on his performance, and asks his neighbours, first in the bench and then in the class, to correct his errors.

I do not think the system of the students voting on the prizes is a good one; they generally try to be fair, but it is hard for lads of their inexperience to weigh evidence on classical or logical merit, on the ground of examinations held during a long session. I have only known one or two instances of favouritism, but it is not uncommon for a student who has laboured with zeal and ability, during nine-tenths of a session, to be ousted by a rival, who steps forward with a good memory to put on a spurt, and make a brilliant display, at the end. The worst effect is on the competitors themselves, who are exposed to two evils; the

first is an intellectual one. There is an art of getting prizes which I, who have got enough to be admitted to count on the matter, hold to be the most contemptible of all arts. Boys just cropping up into men are easily imposed upon. A loud voice will go a great way, perfect effrontery still further; let a student bawl out an answer, right or wrong, to every question that is asked, and in the junior classes he will be sure to get a prize. More than this, he may from tutors, or old students, or careful attention, soon get to know what sort of questions are likely to be asked on each day's lesson, and come crammed, like a turkey ready for eating, with little more real knowledge of the subject than that animal in that state possesses, but with every possible answer to every possible question. In one of the classes of Greek I knew a very stupid man, who, in spite of his being a very bad scholar, resolved to take the first prize in the class, and did it. His plan was to bring every day about twenty closely-written pages to the lecture, with all the words copied from the dictionary having any relation to the words in the lesson. When anything was asked, he roared out one of those words, and was as likely to be right as wrong.

The moral evil is much greater. Nothing annoyed me more during my attendance on the classes than the spirit of rivalry, which was ever apt to exceed the limits of good-humoured emulation. Young men, who might have been at once zealous students and pleasant companions, became a burden to themselves and a nuisance to others, when they were infected by this spirit. Competition, it may be said, is the very law of life; we should be prepared in time to meet what we must meet in the world, and accustom ourselves to the jar of one of those wheels which are essential to its movement. We leave school and college to enter upon other and more serious rivalries. But it seems to me that just because this is an inevitable evil, having its roots in the imperfections of human nature, it is unnecessary and impertinent to anticipate or hasten its results. Let the eyes of young men be directed towards a goal of excellence, but let them be taught that merit is not to be measured by the degree in which they make

it appear that they have outstripped others, running in the same course. At a time when life tends to become more and more a mere race, all the efforts of educationists should be turned to enforce considerations of patience and magnanimity. There is more power in honest rest, believe me, than in half the palms. All those objections bear with double force on the prizes given in the classes, and voted on by the students. I have known the spirit of competition lead, now and then, to the most disgusting displays of a puerile ambition, distorted into malignity. They do not apply equally to prizes, awarded by the University for essays written by competitors who do not know each other; they apply still less to such a system of class lists as at Oxford—a system which, in spite of its ambiguities, I should be disposed, with a few modifications, to retain. The jealousy which I found so rife there, arose from causes which have not their source in details and regulations, but flow from the spirit of the place, and the selfishness which it fosters. During my first session at Glasgow, I remained a spectator of contests into which, as my entrance on the course was premature, I was not expected to enter. Even my father bade me regard this year as a preparatory one, nor do I think I abused his indulgence. To the work of the Latin class, at least, I devoted myself with all the attention of which I was capable, and made so much way that, although I did not obtain a prize, I was voted for among the candidates of the year. In the Greek, which I began this year with the alphabet, I was less fortunate. It is a painful fact that I have never been able to learn Greek. I have spent more years over this study than on anything else I ever acquired—years enough to have made me a master of any of the arts. It has cost me more toil and more torture than all my other studies put together, and yet it is the one of all in which I have attained the least degree of proficiency. The reasons for this are, first, that I began ill and late; secondly, that I ought never to have begun at all.

You must have gathered, from expressions I have already let fall, that my belief in the power of education is very limited. When Dr. Johnson said that a man of

talent might do whatever he liked, he was further from the truth than if he had inverted the proposition. We get nine-tenths at birth; the other tenth is added. We come into the world wonderful machines of mind and matter, made for a certain work; if we are set to other work, the machine may break, it will not accomplish. Where there is any real power it is nature's, and all we can do against it is to stifle it. Practice in the work we are made for makes the result more perfect; no care is lost in that field. We can do nothing without some labour at starting, but no toil against the grain will make it cease to be against the grain. Hence the rule about trouble: the more trouble you take in what you can do, the better you will do it; the longer I hang over this page the more readable it will be; but, of different things, that which you can do most easily you can do best. I have spent days over Greek for every hour I have spent over philosophy; but where my treasure was there was my heart also, and there only, even in the prize lists, was my success. Whether it was altogether owing to that same wretched memory, which sent me to the bottom of my class on paraphrase days in the infant school, or whether there combined with this a certain want of patience, and what Bacon calls *anticipatio* in contradistinction to *interpretatio veri*,—whatever was the cause, the fact was that in learning languages, ancient or modern, I have always had to struggle with a repugnance so intense, that it has appeared to me the sign of an incapacity. Had I been asked fifteen years ago what my vocation was, I would have given the same answer that I am ready to reiterate to-day—not to learn languages. My vocation—that for which the machine was made—may have been Science, it may have been Art, it may have been Law, it may be what I have at last in some degree made it, the pursuit of Philosophy; but it was *not* to learn Latin and Greek, and the time I have wasted in accomplishing the one feat, and attempting the other, only proves that I am right in adhering to the verdict which I formed long ago, when I began to know myself better than others knew me. When my father determined that I should become a great linguist, it was in the course of

his plan, but it was a sentence to years of effort nearly thrown away. Fifteen, working off and on, made me at last a fair Latin scholar. But I would have done well to have followed in the track of Sir Samuel Romilly, who writes in the autobiography which was set before me as a model, "Greek I found too difficult for me, and gave it up."

At a time of life when most youths find it hard to master the rudiments of any language, I opened the grammar of that language, which is at once the most magnificent and the most complex that ever grew up and took shape, under the hands of human ingenuity. I began this preposterous task under the auspices of one whom I esteem and almost love, but who was at once one of the best, and one of the worst, teachers I ever knew. No good student of Lushington's senior class failed to add to his reverence for the nobility of the man, an equal sense of gratitude to the scholar, who led him so gracefully through the higher walks of a literature only matched by our own; but the most zealous of his advocates will tell you that he was not made to teach the rudiments, and that if any one took away more from his junior class than he brought with him, it was because his private studies were pursued with a zeal that got no stimulus from the good professor's sleepy hour.

Ramsay with his clear, resonant voice, with his vigilance, activity, and precision, would have been at home where Lushington was at sea; he, with his accurate activity, was the very man to drill boys just passing into men. He told us that his hair stood on end when we made a false quantity. He made us write prose sentences according to the rules of grammar, and counted the errors in our verse on his fingers. He told us that punctuality was the greatest of the minor virtues, if it was a minor virtue, and that when we offered indisposition as an excuse for absence, we must say whether it was mental or bodily. He was a shrewd man, with sharp little eyes, and a vein of dry humour; it almost struck me he would have made a good actor. He used to act admirably in the class when he leant forward on his desk, and pretended to get into a rage, and his renderings of the *Aulularia* and *Miles Gloriosus* were

inimitable. He was scholar enough to be a first rate expositor of Persius and Juvenal, a sufficient antiquarian to write some good articles in Smith, and comment on Cicero's speeches, and become an able editor of the *De Cluentio.* I attended the Junior Latin for two years, starting in the second by competing for the first prize; I worked hard and steadily during the whole session, but, towards its close, when we had about one thousand lines of verse to say off by heart, some of my competitors managed to make a great show, and I was only offered the fifth prize, a position I did not choose to accept. The following year vindicated my indignation: my former opponents sunk into the background in the Senior—where we read Horace and Tacitus—and if I was only third in rank, I followed worthier rivals in a year when I might well have been excused if I had remained without distinction.

As to the Greek, I must say in justice to those who were bent on my acquisition of the language, that they spared neither pains nor expense in affording me every possible assistance. During the spring of the first winter, a tutor was called to aid me, a senior student, and something of a character. We used to call him alternately Lord Bacon and Aristophanes from his continual quotations of those authors, and his half-rustic simplicity contrasted strangely with the learned sound of his name. If he did not do me much good, it was mainly my own fault. I would or could not learn the verb—that accursed Greek verb—and he was easily led into discussing ancient history and geography, and speculations about antiquities and etymology, which were not to the purpose. My father unwittingly combined to keep me back; for, not content that my knowledge should be thorough, he resolved it should be profound, and bought for me and made me read, and sometimes make long abstracts of, books I could not to this day understand. To please him I have toiled, summer after summer, through Funcius, and Sanctius' *Minerva*; Hoogeveen, *de particulis Graecorum*, and Schaefer, *de stylo linguae latinae*; I have analyzed Grotius on pronouns, and somebody's comparative tables of the particles

of the Indo-Germanic tongue, and dipped deep into Bopp and Popp and Grimm, and laboured prematurely at Max Müller, and read right through—Heaven help me!—Donaldson's *Cratylus*, and even made myself believe that the *Varronianus* was interesting. Meanwhile my second year at Lushington's proved as useless as the first; it grieved me that the professor whom above all others I liked, should alone have cause to complain of my negligence: remonstrances, tasks, were all in vain, and, while my father wished to make me a second Hermann, I could not conjugate τίθημι.

The first step I made towards a very partial knowledge of the language was in the year 1850-1851, when I was placed under the very dry, but very able, hands of Mr. James Browning. He re-ground me in the grammar with a little more success. Later, I went to him in the summer mornings and read Sophocles; when I went afterwards to Lushington's "Provectiores" and Senior, I had got at least a knack of translation; poetry and history were helping me to the language which could not help me to history and poetry; but many a weary day and night, I hung over the pages of that grammar in convulsive and ineffectual efforts, and Greek still hung like a loadstone round my neck. If I were proud of my other successes, the question "How are you getting on with your Greek?" was enough to damp my ardour, and cast a gloom over my hopes. When the time came for me to go to Oxford, I suffered agonies over the irregular verbs, and though Harvey's stout hand pulled me through, I had out my list of them for the third or fourth time, and studied them for the first and second hundredth; at every examination they haunted me like injured ghosts. I got to be able to read that strange tongue at last; but I understood Plato first and then translated him; and it is not many years ago since Jowett interrupted me in some metaphysical subtilty with the exclamation, "Study the particle ἄν." "Sweet Mistress Ann," I wooed you long, without love, and so I wooed you in vain.

My success in those branches of natural science to which I had an opportunity of devoting a share of time

and attention, emboldens me to think that I had some capacity for such researches. During my first session, I attended the experimental course of the Natural Philosophy, taught by the young Mr., now the famous Dr. William Thomson. The lectures which I heard were on Electricity and Magnetism. I took careful notes, read, thought, and made experiments on subjects which interested me intensely. I was regularly examined during the course, and gave in my name for a series of special examinations at the end. The result was that I got one of the two prizes which were offered at the close of the year, and made my first appearance on the platform on the 1st of May, under the auspices of my old playfellow's brother. I remember his handing the prize to me with the phrase, "A very young, but very ardent, natural philosopher." "You would be ardent," my mother said to me on my way home, "in everything that interested you." I was sent besides to the anatomical course of Dr. Allen Thomson, one of the clearest lecturers to whom I have ever listened. It was a good idea, and, whatever way I turn myself, I shall never have cause to regret the time I gave to the study of one of the most universally interesting of sciences. I devoted myself with zeal to the early part of the course, made elaborate notes, drew diagrams, and spent hours in the Museum, so that I have still a notion of the main features of the human skeleton. . . .

BAGNÈRES DE BIGORRE, June 18.

If I were to choose, out of the years which I spent in the Observatory, a portion of one to live over again, my choice would fall on the summer months of 1849. It is the period to which, if I had to pass through it again with power to look before and after, I would add, and from which I would take the least. I believe that a variety of circumstances combined to make that summer among the happiest of my life. There must have been a purer air than usual blowing over our hill, that brought to us all, and to me in particular, more than our usual share of health and spirits. I had no weight hanging over my

head, no heart-burning, no regrets. I seemed to walk with a freer step, to lie down to a deeper rest, and rise to a more open day. Great events enkindling our sympathies, made our blood run faster in our veins; the year was full of hope, and its tumults were sufficiently far away to let us contemplate the storm in tranquillity. I was left at leisure, unvexed, uninterrupted, unconstrained, to mark out a great study, and to achieve an important work. And after all is said, is it not this above all things else that makes life happy? When we are ill and idle, or enslaved, the very air is full of poisonous thoughts. Give us health and let each sunset see the day's work done, man's curse has become man's glory, and we are masters of the world.

All June and July, I remember, Agnes and I continued our visits to Govan in the morning; afterwards I went alone, and it was my delight to walk down there in the long summer afternoon, when the plain was full of mists, and the air of pleasant sounds. My work was over, and I, evening after evening, rambled slowly up again, loitering in the garden among the strawberries, and losing myself in reveries while I pulled the delicious fruit, till the cool shades and the cattle driving home reminded me that night was near.

Fulton and I read at Ovid. It may have been a bit of the *Fasti*, or the love-letter of some Grecian dame, or the elegy on a parrot, or the dirge on the death of Albius Tibullus; and he led me to appreciate the sweetness, the tenderness, and the melody of that poet—enough in himself to make a golden age—that graceful lover whom our Milton loved, with whom I have spent as many and as pleasant hours as with any of our English bards. Sometimes when our task was done, we wandered about the fields together among the new-mown hay, or by the riverside—"a large navigable river passable only by ships"—watching the steamers come up with their summer crowds, while he talked, and I listened to the mellow old man's pleasant gossip, mixed with the lines which we had been reading, and which kept making music in his head. "Castra sequentur alii, Protesilaus amet."

But I have been beginning with the end of the day; you must imagine me when breakfast was over walking away to my room, and sitting down resolutely with my books, to read and take notes. In my study, with the great maps on the walls, and my desk before me, I spent most of the forenoons of that summer, during which I set myself a great task and accomplished it, to master the *History of Rome.* Do not attempt *many* things but *much*; do not read many books, but *possess* a few great ones. There is no better rule for a student, no surer guide in the path of self-culture. In proportion as I have followed it, I have found my time well spent, and my efforts fruitful; in proportion as I have wandered from it, I have lost my way, and built houses upon the sand. Singleness of purpose is as much the test of power in the intellectual, as singleness of heart is the test of purity in the moral, world. But we must remember the proverb, "Nothing great is easy"; and nothing demands a stronger strain of will, than the sacrifice and concentration involved in devoting oneself to follow out an aim.

It is, therefore, impossible to pursue, with the steadfastness essential to success, any object which we do not naturally desire—to attain any goal other than that which we have ourselves set before ourselves. What I could not do in order to learn Greek grammar, I did in order to become familiar with the annals of a people whose greatness I recognized, and of whose paramount influence over the world I was well aware. I have always had a passion for history, and from the time when, in my boyish fancies, I followed Napoleon over the Alps to Marengo, and heard the cannon greet the sun of Austerlitz, to the day, long after, when I closed the last volume of Gibbon, I have spent few happier hours than those which I devoted during that summer to the *History of Rome.* Novels, romances, reviews, were thrown aside; I read, I thought, I dreamt of Rome; the biographies over which I refreshed myself when I was tired of sieges and battles, and the change of laws and the strife of the forum, were the lives of her mighty

men; my books of travels were Dennis's *Etruria*, and White's *Excursions in the Abruzzi*, for they taught me more about the fall of Veii, and the stubborn Samnite war; my tales were of Roman lovers and Roman traitors; my antiquities were concerned with the Praetor, and Censor, and Consul Romanus; with the Seven Hills, and their Jove's temple on the Capitol; with the offices and the insignia, the ramparts, and the ruins, of the Eternal City. My orator was the author of the *Catilines*, my poets were Tibullus and Ovid. The heroes of my imagination were Spurius Cassius and Appius Caecus, and Licinius, and Pontius Telesinus, and Pyrrhus, and the Gracchi, with Caesar and Hannibal far above them all.

When I went back to my games, from the study of Arnold, and Niebuhr, and Smith, and Michelet, it was to range my bricks in the order of the field at Regillus, or Sentinum, or Cannae, or Metaurus, and fight over on the carpet those fights which determined the destinies of the world. It was a glorious summer spent with the mighty deeds of mighty men, when my head was clear and my blood ran free, letting me know what life was then, and what it yet may be.

Day after day meanwhile, tidings came from a remote corner of Europe, of events going on before the eyes of men, as great, as rich in heroes, and nearly as wide in their issues as any of those about which I was reading. It was the year of the great Hungarian and Italian wars. No romance of history, from Syracuse to Mexico, was ever more full of interest than that Hungarian campaign. I have been, of later years, thrown much into the society of men younger than myself, and found it difficult to make them realize the breathless interest with which the friends of liberty in Europe watched every phase of that momentous struggle. One year has seldom seen a sight like that of two nations suddenly springing to life, and demanding to be free; never has the next followed up such a victory by such a tragic close. This is not the place or time to write a history of those events, or the men who were the leaders in them. My feeling regarding the wars remains as it was when I ran every morning through the woods to the village,

to catch the first tidings from the East. My veneration for their chiefs grows only, as I grow in power to appreciate their greatness. One word only for those—and their name is legion—who condemn them and their efforts, because they did not succeed. By every right reckoning they did succeed. Kossuth and Mazzini both struck at a monstrous evil—the Austrian rule—and they broke it. The triumph of the Triumvirs was none the less eminent, that France came in and stifled the resurrection of Rome in her ashes, and brought back over Italy an oppression so ridiculous, that the very hands which came to destroy the whole have been compelled to save a part, lest the whole should finish what it had again begun—the breaking of its chains.

The genius of the Magyar chief was none the less transcendent that Russia came with her myrmidons to re-instal the decrepitude of the Hapsburgs upon a tottering throne, and over the necks of a people maddened by brutalities, more unbearable because inflicted by imbecile hands. History already begins to vindicate the revolutions of a year, which the violence of two continental nations, and the indifference of English statesmen, alone prevented from being the most glorious of this century. . . .

Since then I have known both Kossuth, of whom I shall have much to say, and Mazzini, whom I met for the first time in a London drawing-room in 1850, when he was fresh from the fall of Rome, and looked as you have seen him in the old pictures, still young, with raven hair and great, wonderful eyes. Eight years passed and I met him again, when he looked an old man, with grey beard and hair, and a furrowed brow, beneath which the wonderful eyes were still glowing, lit with the light of that genius which has half redeemed Italy amidst her throngs of foes. Those who know Mazzini love him, while Kossuth is more a man to venerate; but I have never seen either of them, without longing that they had known her who knew so well to appreciate all greatness, who, from her watch-tower in the north, followed with so breathless an interest every change of their fortunes, and with a sadness almost unto death mourned their fall. My mother, with

a tenderness beyond that of women, had a lion heart, and I believe she would have been almost willing to have sent those who were nearest to her to come back like the Spartan, with their shield or on it, after fighting for a cause she held so sacred. . . .

My mother was never very strong, but she seldom seemed to be seriously ill. Both she and my father had lately begun to be anxious about a pain which she felt more and more frequently. During the autumn of 1850 they consulted one of the most eminent of our Glasgow physicians. He saw the danger to which our ordinary doctor had been blind. A few weeks afterwards they went to Edinburgh to see the famous Dr. Simpson. It was at the beginning of the session when they went, and I tried to drown my terror in study, but in vain, it haunted me night and day.[1]

Promises of recovery came from Edinburgh, and when they returned to us it was with good hope that we slowly drove up the hill together, the hill we were to drive slowly down together four months afterwards. . . .

You will not ask me to turn over the dark pages of that winter which seared my soul for ever. . . .

At last there came a morning of March when the wind was blowing through heaven, when I was shaken from a feverish sleep to see the end. The eighteenth morning of March! It comes back and back, and leaves the same dark memories; miserable morning, that took away more than half my life, and left me to drift on starless through a desolated world. Nay, rather, blessed morning that took her away from sorrow, that made an end of all her pain, that answered the longings of a life of faith. . . .

I have had many trials since, but never one which

[1] In another letter, the last but one of this autobiography of his youth, Nichol relates his University career during the year 1850-51, and mentions the prizes he gained, and the books he read during that time. In this letter he speaks also of a journey to England with his father, and of a meeting with Mazzini in the British Museum. The University prizes were of no essential importance, and there is nothing said of Mazzini beyond the fact of his having met him.

made me desolate like that, when I moved about calm and cold and shed no tears. I have work to do in the world, but it often seems little worth. I have other duties now, and new relations, and one at least as near as she whom I lost,

> "But my soul from out that shadow which lies floating on the floor,
> Shall be lifted nevermore."

CHAPTER II.

LATER YOUTH, 1851-54.

LIFE AT THE OBSERVATORY, AND AS A STUDENT IN THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW.

WITH his mother's death, the consecutive autobiography of the previous chapter comes to a close. But with the aid of early letters and of a Journal, kept in some detail while Nichol was a student at Glasgow and at Oxford, it has been found possible to tell the story of his life during the next ten years largely in his own words. For the years 1851-53, the material is scanty, as no Journal was kept, and the letters are few. There is little, however, of importance to relate in regard to these years. Nichol continued to distinguish himself in his various classes, and as the writer of "University prize-essays." He was ambitious, and his father was ambitious for him. He worked hard—far too hard—both at Glasgow, and at Oxford, as he himself in after life admitted; with the inevitable result, in the case of one who was never really robust, of permanent injury to his health and nervous system. His intellectual exertions were by no means limited by the idea of University distinction, as the following extract from a letter to his sister, then at school in England, will show.

"Another *note* dear Agnes, but I promise you this shall be followed without fail by a letter (yet after all my notes are longer than father's). Last time, too, I sent you a piece of good news, and now I have obeyed one of your injunctions.

"I actually have made a whole clean copy of my verses

on 'Ailsa Craig'[1] for you. You had better give it to Mr. R. as an essay, and then all Nottingham will be filled with news of the 'wonderful genius of a small girl.' There's conceit for you! But I fear it's a mistake to suppose that the rhymes would do you so much credit after all. My estimate is, I hope, not very high; but give me your critical opinion of its faults, not mere praise. I should like the judgment of some one who knew nothing about the author, but this would not be very easy to get, as such a person would probably stick half way.

"I think the general plan and meaning is good and true at least, and some of the stanzas at the end tolerable, but the great bulk bears tokens of the hurry with which it was *got up*. That is not the way to write poetry. Whether I may ever do that fairly or not I cannot tell, but hope to come nearer it at any rate than in these Spenserians.

"I am much delighted with Smith's volume, which has now come out. I have read it through, and found much of the purest poetry there. But I shall tell you more of it hereafter."

The Smith referred to in this letter was Alexander Smith, the author of *A Life Drama*, and afterwards librarian to the University of Edinburgh. Nichol had made his acquaintance about this time, and the two authors remained close friends till Smith's death in 1867. In the meantime life at the Observatory flowed tranquilly on, with little external incident. The gloom which the death of Professor J. Pringle Nichol's first wife had cast upon the household was brightened—both for the husband and the children—by Professor Nichol's marriage, in July, 1853, with Miss Elizabeth Pease of Darlington, a lady whose life has been devoted, from first to last, to works of noble benevolence, and to the furtherance of many righteous causes. Miss Pease's name, and that of her father, the late Joseph Pease, were well-known in connection with the great Anti-Slavery movement of those days, with the efforts of the friends of British India, and

[1] This poem appeared in the *Glasgow University Album*, published in 1854.

with the cause of Free Trade. During her husband's life-time she was the affectionate and devoted friend of his family, and after his death she continued to share all their joys and sorrows with equal interest and love. She still lives at Edinburgh, in honoured old age.

On September 8th, 1853, Nichol wrote in a letter to his sister:

". . . Now I think I have joked long enough. This is a most serious time for me, and twenty years is a very serious space to look back upon. General reflections are not of much use. I hope mine have been special. This is a great part, in all probability, of my *mortal* life. We all trust that word is necessary, my dearest sister; that there is an immortal life, of which twenty years is a very small proportion, verily no proportion at all. But it is now and here, to-day and to-morrow—this year, and as many as God pleases that I shall walk here—it is now I must prepare to go with you and father, and join my mother there. And verily I must climb long and faster in the next cycle before I can be ready to join her. To you at every important epoch of my life I will look for direction and aid. Towards another I will gaze, who watches just as closely with 'sweetest eyes were ever seen.' I have had trials and difficulties heretofore, but they ought to have nerved me, and I have given way. I have had advantages almost unparalleled, and have in the strength of them gone not half the way that many have reached without them. I have, knowing it all the time, sinned again and again against my conscience, and broken through my resolutions. This truly is crime that must be redeemed in some way or other, and the quicker the better. My intellect, my physical frame, and my soul alike demand a total reform, before any but those whose eyes are shaded by love can rank me among the noble of the earth. Thanks, dear, for your quotation; believe that I shall try to act upon these beautiful good thoughts, and trust that I remain,

"YOUR BROTHER."

In reading the closing sentences of this letter one must remember that the writer was a boy of twenty years, and one whose practice came much nearer to his ideal than does that of most young men of his age; also that an "examination of conscience" on the part of a gifted young Scotchman of the middle of the nineteenth century would tend to be more scrupulous than may seem altogether reasonable to our present *fin-de-siècle* morality.

In the next month of the same year he wrote to his sister in a similar strain:

"Well, dear Agnes, I promised to write you a long letter to-day, and ought, yet it may not be so long as you or I would wish, as I have just finished scribbling to father till it draws latish. I have been sending him a confession of sins, which I generally find it my painful duty to do at this season of the year, this terminus of summer, when I have to review and generally, or too often, find myself wanting. The present year weighs in the balance a good deal lighter even than usual.

"Reasons are many, but excuses none. I ought not to have been unsettled, because things were moving rather confusedly around me. What is a man worth if those circumstances over which he has no control are to sway him this way and that like the wind?—to-day boasting of its southern warmth, to-morrow again right 'in the east.' We must all mould the clay of time by our own wills for ourselves, if we mean to shape a course in the world at all, or do anything more than *speak* of valiant deeds, sitting muffled in flannel in an arm-chair. There is a great debt resting on my shoulders from the mis-spent past; it seems a very heavy load. But I will never begin to carry it up the hill sooner than to-day. I have written this motto in my diary, 'Look not ever mournfully into the past; it comes not back. Wisely improve the present; it is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy future without fear, and with a manly heart.' It is not altogether true, for the past ever and anon comes up; and, touching one on the shoulder, and looking in one's face, comes to aid

as well as to sadden.[1] Above all, it comes up with well-known vanished forms in all its old glory, transfigured, free from its former taints, to bless for evermore; but for the *present* it must advance, and not retard.

> Trusting to-morrow and loving to-day,
> Toiling and temperate wend thee thy way,

is a watchword which I have coined for myself; and the more I act upon it the purer, I believe, will my religion become.

"That, my dearest sister, is another matter, a very grave and serious matter, which each of us must decide for himself. It is with heartfelt pleasure I hear of your interests and questions. Questions on these subjects are put soon by all earnest minds. One great truth is far too often lost sight of—that the answers to such questions must come very much out of the great silence of one's own soul, and the still Infinite sent to the soul and to the Universe by God. Points of real religion cannot very well in any days, now or in those of old Palestine, be settled over a tea-table. In prattle they are rather apt to be forgotten altogether, and the mere *forms* dilated on. These may do in their place, and are conversational so far—though even then with reverence—but unhappy is the man, and the mind, which makes up Religion of them.

"You will form your own judgment on doctrines hereafter; the bases, on which you and I and all in common may rest, seem chiefly and greatly to be;—a belief in our being children to whom a kind Father in infinite mercy has revealed, through Christ above all, and somewhat also through far-seeing men, portions of his glory; children who are afflicted that they may be purified, tempted that they may be tried, parted in tears on this shore in order that they may unite for ever in starry joy on that, seeing now dimly as through a glass, but living in the assurance that faith, hope, and charity here will lead them after

[1] Compare *Hannibal*, Act I., Scene vii.:

> Then leaning o'er my shoulder, steals the Past,
> So sunny, yet so sad and full of tears,
> That the dim Present fades into a dream.

death to see Him as He is. How little of this is touched by the metaphysical discussions on 'fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,' with which men so vainly fill each other's ears.

"If we are frail, allowance is made for our frailty, and each one of us can, if he chooses, carve his destiny on high. Doubt on these truths, false and evil, seems most to haunt uncelestial minds. Doubt on minor points unaffecting these may fix the bounds of faith as it can, without disturbing our life and hope and love.

"This can I say now, and no farther; all farther is minor matter, and may occupy me at various times. On such I would have you influenced by your own heart and reason only. It seems to be strange that I should be able to give instruction at any time to one so much greater than myself, yet I believe I can, and will, more and more delight to hold with you the highest, dearest converse; to you and father I turn, and will return, when dinned with foolish noises."

The following experience is chronicled in another letter of about the same date: "As to the theatre, I hoped to see Miss Faucit as Desdemona, which was advertised for Thursday, but lo! and behold (and listen to me stamping!) next day appears, 'In consequence of the numerous objections made to the representation of *Othello*, Miss Faucit will appear as Mrs. Beverley in *The Gamester*.' Horrible idiots! Even Bowdler's Shakespeare, it seems, is not proper enough for the respectability of Glasgow!"

On the subject of "the rights of women," he wrote: "There is certainly no sign of civilization which has a more intimate connection with the moral condition of any nation, than the position which women hold in their society. I deprecate, as much as any one can, the subjection which even in Greece and Rome—not to speak of Egypt and the East—prevented the noblest faculties of most of their females from finding their due field of expansion, and made instances like Aspasia, Cornelia, and Zenobia rare; but neither can I yet, on the other hand, admit the *similarity* rather than *equality* of occupation advocated by the

ultra-changers in America. . . . By the by, among the many interesting historical facts connected with the subject, there is a noticeable contrast between the comparative carelessness with which the most refined classic nations treated their women, and the respect, almost amounting to reverence, in which they were held by the rudest Gothic nations; indicating, in those uncivilized peoples, an element of moral strength which fitted them well to subdue the world, and which has materially influenced the whole tone of modern civilization. This feeling of true gallantry it was which threw a softening light over the rough age of chivalry; and in the nations of Europe, it is curious to remark, women are held in respect almost in exact proportion to the infusion of this Teutonic element. In England they have, as we all know well, both rights and wrongs. I do not reckon among the former that misused sense of the word gallantry, which is so well depicted by Lamb in one of his *Essays of Elia* (read it, if you can). Read over also Hood's *Song of the Shirt*, and think of the *Scarlet Letter*, in reference to the wrongs of women. Think of *The Princess* as a very true statement of their proper position."

In 1854 he wrote in his Diary:

"July 1st. I am at home again, and glad that my father has resolved to take the chair at Kossuth's meeting. It will do good. . . . We have got several answers to our invitations; it is curious to see the different views various people take. Some are, though anxious to see a show, afraid to compromise themselves. Others respect Kossuth, but cannot approve of his politics. Sages! It is with no ordinary feelings of excitement that I expect a man whom I still regard as the foremost on this earth, with whom I would willingly have fought in his heroic struggle, with whom I would willingly renew it.

"July 3rd. About three o'clock Kossuth arrived at the Caledonian station, where my father and I had been for some time waiting to receive him. There was such a crowd that we had some difficulty in getting into the carriages. We dined at four, after which our guests retired to rest for a while. Our evening reception turned out very well.

There were altogether about one hundred persons present, many of the most respectable gentlemen of the town, others not so. The noisy democratic committee presented itself as a most unsatisfactory specimen of the liberalism of Glasgow.

"July 4th. Joshua, had he been alive, would have made the sun stand still to-day. Oratory like this may well lead nations, as by an enchanter's wand, to do the hero's will. Kossuth's forenoon speech was but an introduction to the other, and yet it contained some of the most glorious appeals ever uttered. I cannot describe the entrancement of his great speech in the evening. None present ever before listened to eloquence and reason so wonderful. 'The Bourbon will never rouse a spirit any more. The Hapsburg may rouse a spirit, but it will be the spirit of assassinated nations, and violated oaths, and liberty rising to break her crimson chains.' Would that our hall were often to re-echo such shouts as those which rang through it, when the whole vast concourse rose at once and with the acclaim of myriad voices acknowledged their king. This forenoon some are beginning to read his speech, and find it incontrovertible; they scarce know whether he is 'going *to do* or not'; they rather suspect he is, and feel annoyed that they have held back so long. One of the best of these time-servers called to-day, anxious to show him through the Exchange, and get him to dine at his house. Humph! Two days ago he said to the chairman, 'You won't appear on the platform with that man, will you?' 'That man' fortunately declined his invitation. This afternoon the governor and his suite, with Madame Kossuth, left for a trip to the Highlands; they are to return on Monday."

Shortly afterwards Nichol wrote in his Diary:

"A letter from Kossuth, just such as regards himself as I should have expected him to write. He has, with all the other characteristics of greatness, that true humility which only accompanies the loftiest spirits. It would take whole days to tell all the good he has done to me. I

recollect him above all as a quiet man, who would walk through England without looking on any one to say, 'I am a prince.' Let others talk; in general he rests and thinks, yet at first sight you see something in those eyes that makes you look again. Some spell hovers around that ample brow. Look again; you will not find a head like that in palaces; the stamp of Empire is on it; the crown of a monarch that God alone can give. That man was never second to another, let him look as modest as he can. But he interposes a word here (listen! you will not care to forget it), probably in dissent from some acknowledged aphorism; however startled, you feel he has authority to say it. Some babbler is ready to argue fluently; these mild melancholy eyes are lit with a flash of contempt, and the man of words shrinks into his shell. In public or private, before thousands, or, what is often much harder, before one, let Kossuth speak and he triumphs. How practical he is! in this too fitted to rule: yet again how gentle! one is drawn within the circle of reverence to that of love. 'Ah! what a child I would be,' said he once tenderly, 'you do not know how I should like to live quietly with my wife away from noisy life, near streams and hills, and play all day long with my children.' Feeling misfortunes keenly, he bears them as great men do; yet there is a gloom burnt into his soul. 'I love your wild mountains now, for the dear sunshine of old makes me very sad.'"

A pathetic interest, in addition to that of the subject, attaches to these notes of youthful hero-worship. Nichol's last contribution to literature was an article on "Louis Kossuth," which appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* (June, 1894), when its author was already stricken by the malady from which he never recovered.[1]

In the course of his future life, Nichol was frequently the advocate of unpopular causes, and his defence of them was certainly not less fervent from the fact of their being

[1] As will be seen in a subsequent chapter, Nichol visited Kossuth in his old age at Turin.

unpopular. During the American Civil War he threw himself, in the press and on the platform alike, into the cause of the North, with an energy and ardour which ran strongly counter to the prevailing sentiment of his Glasgow townsmen. This brought on him a resentment, the extent of which he possibly exaggerated, but of which he was never, and in no wise, ashamed. The following is significant, as showing that his sympathies were already awakened and pronounced on behalf of the American slaves:

"September 17th. Heard a lecture from Parker Pillsbury; he is a downright noble-minded philanthropist, speaking boldly, though rudely, from his heart. His discourse was terribly wanting in method and climax, a defect which the emphasis and power of some passages barely redeemed. With much that was old, and to me not very conclusive, regarding the 'fathomless' distinction between man and brute, I got much stirring intelligence regarding the prohibition of education to the slaves, and the doctrines in which their minds are steeped by the sycophantic priests of Protestantism in America. . . . Brown writes me that Mackennal is to stay at Hackney College. How we shall miss him at election time!

"September 25th. Last night I went with Palmer to attend a Polish meeting. The speeches were rather anti-government than anything else, except indeed Crosskey's, which was rather rhetorical, yet in many parts really rose into eloquence. Altogether he contrived to strike a key-note in the audience, and was cheered to the roof. His sermon on 'St. Paul' last Sunday was admirable."

A few notes of his miscellaneous reading at this time may be of interest:

"Maurice on Sacrifice," he wrote, "is near the root of the matter. I am not prepared to say how far this most worthy man—who in his whole bearing and discourse is nearer to an incarnation of the spirit of reverence than any I have seen—is consistent in the position he holds regarding plenary inspiration, the thirty-nine articles, etc., or even how far he is throughout consistent with himself; but I am conscious that he has caught a firmer grasp of

the mainspring of Christianity, and the source of its vitality, than any other of our teachers, unless indeed Carlyle. But Maurice has a better temper, and though not a deeper, yet a more overpowering Charity; and also perhaps a more constantly present humility. He proclaims with all the earnestness that Religion demands, that self-sacrifice is its centre, the act by which we are to bring ourselves back to God, after which his mercy is ready to pardon; that it is this act which is symboled forth by all the old altars, whether of Abel, of Abraham, or of Agamemnon; that this is what reached its culmination, and received its seal, in the blood of Christ; that this was a self-sacrifice of God; a bending down of Himself to take us home. There is something indeed in this idea of divine power to keep man from sin. The ordinary view is different. But the love of this spirit surely is what leads us to sympathize with the brave deeds of all time—in Athenian gaol, or Gothic glade, or Crimean swamp; it is only with renunciation that life, properly speaking, can be said to begin." [1]

"Read *Companions of my Solitude*—how exquisite the style! how delicate the thought! handling the most perilous of themes with the most perfect purity. There is philosophy in it, and yet more charity; it reminds me at times of Eckermann's conversations with Goethe.

"Kingsley's *Alexandrian Lectures* are at once concise and comprehensive, but not very original; and here, as elsewhere, in straining to establish his own view, he gives scant justice to those who stand not on opposite, but on different, ground. Curiously this same error pervades Shelley's letters, genial and loving and manly though they are. He can allow nothing great out of Greece, and looks down with unfair contempt on Goth and Jew alike."

Nichol's power of literary expression, though naturally ripening with advancing years, had early attained an unusual

[1] To understand the development of Nichol's views on Religion, what comes out in these youthful notes must be compared with his later opinions, stated in the seventh chapter of this book.

degree of maturity; in a volume of verse, printed privately in 1854, there are several whole poems, and frequent detached passages and lines, which he did not think unworthy to incorporate in volumes given to the public many years after, where they are hardly distinguishable from the work of his later life. In this year, too, he organized and edited the *Glasgow University Album*, a volume written mainly by the students, with a preface by himself, and dedicated to Alfred Tennyson. In reference to it Nichol's father wrote to De Quincey as follows:

OBSERVATORY, GLASGOW, 16th April, 1854.

My dear De Quincey,—. . . As to John's *Album*, he had many thanks to offer you for your kindness. But he felt from the first that he could not ask you to take any specific trouble on his account, and the publication besides could not wait. He will send you a copy one of these days. His productions are signed J.N., E., and Basalt. He was obliged to put in more from his own pen than he cared to acknowledge. Pray read them, and tell me what you think of them. I rather like *Isis*, *Psammenitus*, and the *Ode from Catullus*. You will find in the same volume a brief appeal to yourself concerning Kant. Don't imagine that *I* have any pretensions to enter on controversy with *you* on such a matter; but I think it would be well if so important a matter in philosophical history were set at rest. Do, therefore, take up the question again; and, by authorities, set it at rest.

Are you coming to Glasgow? If so, you will not forget the Observatory. Say to Miss Florence and Miss Emily that Mrs. Nichol and I should be very glad if they could find occasion to make this a resting-place on their way to Tipperary.—Ever very affectionately yours,

J. P. NICHOL.

The labour which Nichol spent on this volume was in after years chiefly valued by him as having been the means of introducing him to Sydney Dobell. At his request—the suggestion probably came from their common friend, Alexander Smith—Mr. Dobell sent a poem to the volume, which its editor found unsuitable, and wrote giving the poet

his reasons for its non-insertion. The correspondence, in appearance so inauspiciously begun, resulted in a friendship which remained close and unshaken till Mr. Dobell's death in 1874.

As his father mentions in his letter to De Quincey, Nichol had to write more for this *Album* than he desired, and he was by far the largest contributor to its pages. His contributions were *Psammenitus*, *Verses* (signed E.), *Isis Celata*, *Notes on the Functions of the Imagination*, *Nuptial Ode from Catullus*, *Reflections Anti-Moore*, *In Memoriam* (J. G.), and *Stanzas from an Address to Ailsa Craig* (signed Basalt). His father contributed the last article, on *De Quincey versus Kant.* The volume was remarkable in many ways. Poets, such as Alexander Smith, as well as Nichol; scholars, such as Mr. D. B. Monro, the present head of Oriel College, Oxford; future divines, such as Professor Eadie, Dr. Brown, and Dr. Mackennal; and literary men, such as Dr. Ross, all contributed to it. In *Psammenitus* and the *Stanzas from an Address to Ailsa Craig*, we have more than a foreboding of Nichol's future work as a poet.

Although it was never republished by himself, a few stanzas from the latter are worthy of reproduction here.

STANZAS FROM AN ADDRESS TO AILSA CRAIG.

WHAT means it? Is there, far from mortal eye,
A quiet haven for the human soul?
What powers contend, in earth and sea and sky,
'Mid storm and strife—with whom shall be the mastery?

Thou dost not answer—little canst thou reck;
Amid the surgings of eternity,
Thou too art but a mote—the merest speck,
In the great stream. Above, once rolled the sea;
Wait yet a while, thou shalt no longer be.
Then, other shores and other crags shall rise,
While o'er thy head the waves are seething free:
Thy form, that now the change of time defies,
Is transient as the bird that round thee fluttering flies.

Yet there *is* rest, although thou know'st it not,
A purpose gleaming through the march of things,
With which, all Change, in every age, is fraught.
Of this, the music of the ocean sings,
This, 'mid the tempest and the thunder, rings,

To mark the mind's advance they all combine,
And tell how soul ascends on soaring wings.
. . . . . .
Almighty mind,
By whom the earth and stars were first designed,
Who holds them in the hollow of His hand;
With Him the universe is intertwined,
He deems the giant hills as grains of sand,
And grasps what thy historians fail to understand.

Such are the daring heights the soul ascends,
In contemplating nature—symphonies
Harmonious ring around me—such as sends
Some deep-toned organ down the aisles, or breeze
Thridding a way among the rustling trees.
. . . . . .

During a visit to Edinburgh in the spring of 1855, Nichol alludes to one of his earliest interviews with Mr. Dobell: "Called with A. Smith on Dobell at Granton. Few persons I have met have such an atmosphere of freshness and purity about them. I always leave his society the better for having been in it."

While in Edinburgh he notes: "Went with Agnes and Palmer to the Swedenborgian Temple, where we listened to a short, heart-felt discourse, happily embodying many of the peculiar doctrines of that sect. They are a queer mystical people, all given to sentiment, which is a good guide when tempered by love; genuine transcendentalists, but too fond of allegory. It is instructive to learn the tenets of these various sects, and know in what the many races of mankind have comfort. There must be truth at the root of all their creeds. Each age and nation has a one-tuned song to sing, some choral chaunt in Time's great Cathedral, embodying their belief in the Invisible, faith in God and his manifold works. I wonder what view of creation the inhabitants of Jupiter, or the sunny Mercureans, now illustrate and expound."

The friends of his student days at Glasgow, their mutual enthusiasms and pursuits, are described by Nichol in a

notice of the late James Brown of Paisley, which he wrote for *Good Words*, January, 1891:

"We were students together" (*i.e.* Brown and himself) "in the Logic Class of Glasgow University, then conducted by the late Professor Robert Buchanan, who initiated into Philosophy and inspired with a love of Letters so many young men, at a time when English Literature, as a distinct study, was recognized only in the northern metropolis. Brown's unusual capacity in thought, as in expression, soon made him prominent among his fellows. None of us in those days wrote very well; for Scotch students had not learnt to distinguish between the styles proper to a sermon and an essay. We rushed over reams of paper, as we spoke at our juvenile clubs, perorating, exhorting, and dogmatizing in a shoal of metaphors. Buchanan did his best to throw reins on our exuberance, but his sometimes caustic criticisms were softened by the kindly admission that without early flowers there can be no later fruits. Most of us had a great deal, perhaps too much, to say, and shared the belief in our duty to reform the world.

"The circle within the circle of those who had views in common—the associated group of which Brown was one of the most conspicuous members—was especially pervaded by the idea of a mission to infuse a higher tone into the Rectorial Elections, the conduct or misconduct of which (for we were always defeated) brought us still closer together. We were all, or thought ourselves to be, keen 'Radicals'; believing in the 'people,' 'progress,' 'free education,' 'wider suffrage,' 'rights of man,' 'rights of women,' etc., etc.—beliefs which some of the few survivors have preserved, while others (be it said without offence) have considerably modified them. At the same time, with whatever degree of consistency, we were flaming 'hero-worshippers'; and fought and fell in championing as our nominees, in succession, John Wilson, Alfred Tennyson, and Thomas Carlyle. For the last, in 1854, our energies and eloquences secured sixty votes, 'under penalties' of being publicly held up as 'Deists,' 'Atheists,' *and* 'Pantheists.' Young men are wiser now, and believe much

less; but we were ridiculously in earnest, and, perhaps, there is no reason to be ashamed of having been once enlisted in a troop of boy-fanatics, looking for neither pension, nor place, nor popularity. To the firm-knit clique that gathered in public about the Molendinar, and met in closer conclave in the Observatory, there belonged several who have made at least honourable names.

"Among our leading spirits, the man of most native genius was John Service, the humorous mentor of our extravagances, in later life a man who firmly kept faith in a soul of goodness even in things evil. Robert Lambie, foremost medical student of his time, was our President till he went abroad, dying afterwards at sea. Our readiest writer was John M. Ross, later the fine Saxon and English scholar and critic, of the High School of Edinburgh. He, with Andrew Buchanan, Jun.—cut off in the early bloom of professional success—and Brown himself were our poets, and supplied the verse pasquinades with which the devotees of the 'Coal-Hole' pelted the supple insinuators of the Janitor's lodge.[1] Our legal lights were Joseph Dixon, equally well-known to his intimates as a rarely learned Shakesperean critic; Benjamin Williams, afterwards Q.C. and M.P. for Carmarthen; and George Palmer, most brilliant of Welsh wits, who sailed from Plymouth for an Australian career in the 'perfidious' *London*. Our great scholar was George Rankine Luke, at once the purest and most commanding spirit among his contemporaries, whose drowning in the Isis, in 1862, buried from Christ Church, Oxford, one who might have been among her most illustrious Deans. Closely associated with the last was our philosopher in chief, Edward Caird, who, with Drs. Mackennal, and Finlayson,[2] is sole survivor among those prominent in that sanguine old High Street College band. On the edge (because not technically a student) was the poet Alexander Smith, than whom a kindlier Scot ne'er lived, and who in our northern verse

[1] This allusion, obscure to later generations, obviously refers to the different local headquarters of the rival Liberal and Conservative Associations.

[2] This was, as already stated, written in 1891. Dr. Finlayson died in 1893. A memorial volume on him has since appeared.

has left no successor. 'Friends, countrymen, and lovers, amid havocs of death, and political partition, there has never been any severing of our regard, nor dimming under autumn skies of our memories of the spring-time—

> When all the world was young, lad,
> And all the trees were green."

To the above list of Nichol's College friends should be added the name of Donald Macleod, at present Moderator of the Church of Scotland, and William Jack, now Professor of Mathematics in Glasgow University, who afterwards became his brother-in-law. These were, however, staunch Conservatives, and therefore their names do not appear among those of "the firm-knit clique," who composed the Glasgow University Liberal Association. Henry Crosskey, afterwards Dr. Crosskey of Birmingham, so well and widely known as a geologist, a preacher, and a politician, was—although not a student, and a few years his senior—one of Nichol's intimates during his Glasgow years, and afterwards. Robert Flint—now the distinguished Professor of Divinity in the Edinburgh University, and previously the occupant of a Chair of Philosophy at St. Andrews—D. B. Monro, and many others who have since risen to eminence, were amongst his associates. A young German poet, Adolph Hain, whose brief life gave promise of literary distinction, was also a member of the Observatory circle.

Dr. Donald Macleod has supplied the following pleasant reminiscence of Nichol's College days:

"John Nichol was junior to me at the University; but in consequence of our being somewhat prominent members of each of the political factions which fought the battle at the election of Rector,[1] we were thrown a good deal into contact—at that time generally very adverse contact. He bore then, as always, the stamp of a certain quality of genius, poetic and philosophic, and characteristically he had 'the love of loves and hate of hates.' His father, the Professor of Astronomy, was certainly the most eloquent

[1] The Rector of a Scottish University is elected by the matriculated students, and represents them in the University Court.

lecturer I ever listened to. Well do I remember the thrills of awe and admiration in which he held us spell-bound, so that, like St. Paul, we sometimes could not tell whether it was 'in the body or out of the body' that we were raised to magnificent visions of the universe, as he unfolded the Nebular Hypothesis, then less familiar than it is now. John was, in many respects like his father, brilliant and forceful. I recollect how it was his habit to come frequently to College, even in cold winter mornings, dressed in a thin swallow-tailed evening coat, worn under his red gown. His hair was long, and he carried himself with no lack of consciousness of his talents and of the promise of his youth. He was recognized by us all as a man of exceptional gifts who had probably a career before him. He was then, as always, but more markedly than in later years,—when there came the almost pathetic mellowing of experience,—a being of passionate intensity, rendering him, as I sometimes knew to my cost, intolerant of opposition, and causing those to resent his aggressiveness who only saw the fierceness of his zeal, and knew not the warmth of his heart and the nobility of his aims. Owing to our political relationships there were perhaps few of his fellow-students who fell more under the strokes of his wrath than I did, but I can say with truth that I never misunderstood him. I recollect especially how wildly sensitive he was when, during the heat of the election, our side issued lampoons in doggerel, in which he often came in for a full share of playful caricature. He had no patience with such methods. He was too fearfully in earnest to pardon indulgences in fun. Most of us, I fear, acted more from the love of excitement, and 'the humours of the fair,' and with the determination that our side should win, than from any profound convictions as to the vital character of the principles involved in the contest. With Nichol it was the reverse: it was all a matter of conscience and of 'fell' earnestness, and his passions burned into a white heat over the political or literary merits of the respective candidates.

"I can never forget his *debut* as a speaker at one of our election meetings. It was held in the Greek class-room, sacred with all who were then students from its association

with Lushington. The chair was filled by a native of Glasgow, whose local accent was in strong evidence. The room was crammed; showers of peas were flying, and the fulness of the young life found vent in party shouts, badinage, and rounds of 'Kentish fire.' Nichol's speech was regarded as the coming feature of the evening, and was perhaps dreaded by some of us as likely to have no small effect upon votes. At last the Chairman rose and announced that 'Mr. Nichol' (but, *more Glasguensi*, he elided the harder consonant and made it Mr. Nihil) 'will address the meeting.' John stepped to the front, his swallow-tail coat tightly buttoned across his chest, his eye flashing, and, tossing back his hair, was about to commence, when a medical student shouted—imitating the Chairman—'Mr. Nihil will now address the meeting,—*ex nihilo nihil fit!*' It was fatal. A roar of unquenchable laughter ensued. The speaker stood indignant, defiant, but the effect of the pun proved ruinous. Even after silence was restored, his most earnest points were discounted by the spirit which the joker had aroused."

Another characterization of Nichol in these delightful student-days, by one of his classmates, the Rev. A. Mackennal, now at Bowdon near Manchester, will be welcomed by all who knew him.

"I first knew him in October, 1852, when the election for the Lord Rectorship took place: Sir Archibald Alison's two years of office had ended; and the Conservative Club put up Lord Eglinton as candidate. No Liberal Association was then existent in the University; the old association had died out in debt and discouragement; 'we were always beaten,' Nichol has written of the College Liberals. The senior students, in the Divinity and Law Schools, were mostly Conservatives; not many of the Medicals troubled themselves with College life in general; it was on the Arts men, the Juniors, that the brunt of the contests fell. The nomination of Lord Eglinton—who was better known as a sporting than as an academical personage—seemed so incongruous that it was not hard to rally the young Liberals in opposition. We formed ourselves into a new Liberal Association, nominated

the Duke of Argyll for Rector, assumed responsibility for the unpaid printing bill of the old association; and for a fortnight the College courts rang with public speeches and personal debate, and were strewn with electioneering squibs. We polled a majority of votes; but of the four 'nations'[1] into which the matriculated students are divided, three voted for Lord Eglinton; so we were beaten.

"The Liberal Association, however, became very lively. The repeal of the University Theological Tests was then a burning question; and we held a meeting to demand their abolition. A Debating Society, called 'the Zetetic,' was constituted, not on a political basis, but consisting mainly of Liberals; and we discussed 'Education, National or Voluntary,' and similar questions. A Temperance Society was formed, also non-political, but under the same impulse of youthful reforming energy. Into all these movements Nichol threw himself with ardour.

"At the beginning of the next session the Liberal Association determined on an unusual course. The office of Rector was an annual one; but by a gracious custom the sitting Rector was elected for a second year without a contest. We opposed Lord Eglinton's re-election, not on personal or political grounds, but to resent what we regarded as a breach of electoral etiquette the year before. Men of eminence were not consulted as to their nomination: the honour was conferred on them spontaneously by the students. It was a natural inference that no man should be approached by the supporters of his opponent with a view to his withdrawal. The Conservative Club had so approached the Duke of Argyll in 1852; and had published some words of his reply, which lost us many votes. We therefore determined to contest the Chair at the end of the first year. Some suspected, Nichol among them, that a Conservative nomination would have gratified the Duke of Argyll more than a Liberal nomination; so we did not propose him again, but brought forward Alfred

[1] In the Glasgow Rectorial Elections at that time, the successful candidate required not only to have a majority of the votes of the students as a whole, but a majority in the four 'Nations,' into which the entire body of the students was divided.

Tennyson. The fight was, however, hopeless from the beginning. The opposition to Lord Eglinton was too invidious. The Professors disapproved of what they looked on as a needless disturbance of class work. Fearing that the Conservative Club might do with the Laureate as they had done with the Duke, we explained the etiquette of the position to Tennyson, and asked him to communicate with no one until the election was over. He wrote, in guarded language, intimating that, if it were practicable, he would rather we withdrew him; and Professor Lushington, his brother-in-law, in equally guarded language, concurred with the suggestion. A large majority of votes was cast for Lord Eglinton; but owing to the system of voting by 'nations' Tennyson was near being elected. Two nations were for him, two for Lord Eglinton; in one of these latter nations there was a tie, and the presiding Professor voted for the *status quo*.

"The final casting-vote of the Principal was also for the occupant of the Chair. Tennyson's letter, acknowledging one in which the result was communicated to him, will show how he felt.

"Saturday, Nov. 18th, '53.

"Dear Sir,—I have just returned from a visit in Kent and received yours of the 16th, wherein you inform me that the Earl of Eglinton has been re-elected Lord Rector of your University.

"Pray, present my warmest thanks to all those of your brother-students who have given me their votes.

"I am sure I do not err in asserting that there is no man on British ground whom you could have pitched upon, as a candidate for your Lord Rectorship, who would have been more grateful than I am to yourself and your party for your kindness in proposing me for that high office, and for your subsequent exertions in my favour. However, and though I am aware that it will seem a little strange to you, I cannot but confess that I felt a kind of relief in learning that the College had adhered to its custom of re-electing the Rector of the former year; and though it may seem still stranger, I would fain request you

(if I could hope that my wish as to this matter might have any weight among you) not to re-propose me next year, but to pass by one who is so essentially not a public man in character, whatever he may chance to be in name, and to raise to the honour of your Lord Rectorship some other who would not only gratify you by his presence at Glasgow, but, it may be, delight and elevate you by his oratory. Renewing my thanks to all,—I remain, my dear Sir, yours obligedly, A. TENNYSON.

"Out of our intimacy with John Nichol came the great privilege of friendship with his father, the Professor of Astronomy. Once a fortnight during the first of these two sessions, once a month during the second, we met on Saturday evenings at the Observatory. Dr. Nichol generally joined us at a long sitting for tea, and frequently looked in on us as we discussed literature, politics, and theology in the library. We had grown warm over the points of Calvinism one evening when he entered. 'What has been the subject of your conversation?' he asked. Ross, who always leaned to Calvinism, jerked out: 'Oh! one of our number has been giving us all Dr. Channing's arguments.' 'Indeed,' said the Professor, and the light in his eye softened from its depths, 'and which is Dr. Channing among you?'

"Dr. Nichol was known to be a friend of Kossuth and Mazzini; his sympathies and those of Mrs. Nichol were strongly with the Anti-Slavery party in the United States. He did not repress, he encouraged, our zeal for those who in Hungary and Austria, and France and Italy, and America, were for personal freedom, and our tendencies toward a liberal theology; but he gave dignity and breadth to our discussions. Alexander Smith was frequently with us, and an interesting young German, Adolf Hain, who had been forced by his liberal sympathies out of his own land and university, and had come to teach in Glasgow.

"Of course literature had a large place in our interests. I was going one day into the Greek class-room, when Nichol put a book into my hands, saying: 'Here, read this and tell me what you think of it.' It was a volume of Mrs. Browning's, open at *The Rhyme of the Duchess*

May. I read no Greek that hour, but I made acquaintance with *Duchess May*, and the *Vision of Poets*, and *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*. At the conversazione of the Liberal Association in 1854, Alexander Smith spoke on 'Liberalism in Literature'; Adolf Hain on 'Liberalism in the German Universities'; but Nichol's own address was the most remarkable. For forty minutes he read to us a paper full of melody and of aspiration. His theme was really Liberalism in life; I have forgotten the title. 'Linked sweetness long drawn out,' said Ross, when it was over. 'A Spiritualist's sermon,' was the reply. Nichol was somewhat of an ascetic at that time; zealous for the discipline which should keep the mind fit for pure thought, and the body for strenuous action. When he was in Oxford, he told me, he was the only teetotaller in the University. There is an inscription in a copy of Emerson's *Essays*, with Carlyle's 'Preface,' which he gave Brown, reprobating the 'damnable habit of smoking.' Another fellow-student spoke to him of having taken opium by way of fitting himself to write an essay. Nichol was infuriated. 'Promise me,' he broke out, 'that you won't do that again, or I'll never speak to you any more.'

"The Liberalism which these fresh souls applauded and nourished in one another, was not the moribund Whiggery of the day; it was not merely a political creed, still less was it partizanship; it was an enthusiastic confidence in freedom of thought, of speech, and of action. Many were surprised, indeed he was surprised himself, that he should be found toward the end of his life in the Conservative ranks; but those who knew him can understand the account he gave of the change. Liberty of thought and speech was secured, the Universities were thrown open, education had become national, Bradlaugh was allowed to sit in Parliament. And, in the meantime, it seemed to him that, both in England and abroad, the principle of subordination was more in need of reinforcement than that of liberty. He joined what he thought was the unpopular party. 'Minorities are always in the right,' he was fond of saying. He was never a democrat; he believed in a natural aristocracy, not necessarily of intellect or of

culture any more than of position, but an aristocracy of character."

A hitherto unpublished poem by Nichol, written while he was still at the Observatory, may close this chapter.

AN AURORA.

Beneath me rested all the weary town
  Wrapped in the evening shadows; while I stood
A watcher on the castled heights that crown
    A waving dusk of wood.

A watcher of the stars that crowding came
  To glorify the darkness of the night,
I saw the northern heavens all in flame
    With ever changing light.

While all around the bright Aurora lay
  Fringes of long black cloud,
A ring of night beneath another day—
    Like dawn above a shroud.

From either side the whirling streamers ran,
  Great tents and banners marched across the sky;
They clashed and mingled in the central van,
    Then seemed to fade and die.

Then flashed again as if a signal flew
  To rouse celestial powers to war's alarms;
A mystic summons brought to sudden view
    A thousand hosts in arms.

The terror deepened, and the battle raged
  More fiercely in the armaments of fire;
Columns of light with shafts of light engaged,
    And hurled their lances higher.

Till when the wondrous fight was lost or gained,
  The crimson squadrons crossed with emerald bars,
Waved their vast wings, and flickered out; then reigned
    Deep silence with the stars.

I listened till I heard a clarion blown
  From the far city, toward the farther west;
The furnace fires like blazing keeps alone,
    Flared through night's sable vest.

CHAPTER III.

STUDENT LIFE AT OXFORD—1855-1857.

IN April, 1855, Nichol left Glasgow, and entered as a Commoner of Balliol College, Oxford. The Glasgow Snell Exhibition was conferred on him in the following year.

"In leaving Glasgow," he wrote, "I wish I had carried away more from my converse with the society there, many arguments I have had with my fellow-students suggesting topics it would be pleasing to recall. Much is gained even in the interchange of thought between equals, for no two men are quite alike, and where there is difference there is interest. I am more unfortunate when I have forgotten what I have learnt from minds in which mine could swim as in a tide of wisdom."

At this time he was over twenty-one years of age, so that he went up to Oxford, like the majority of Scotch students, considerably later than the average Englishman does. Late matriculation in the English Universities—a custom which its Universities' curriculum renders almost necessary for those who have already taken a Scottish degree—has its obvious disadvantages. These Nichol felt to the full. He had to pass "Smalls" and "Moderations," after having in Glasgow been already trained in Philosophy and the higher Literature; and, old as he was for his years, he found himself thrown into the society of men who, in all intellectual interests, were relatively mere boys. For a short time, however, the novelty of his surroundings interested and amused him. On first getting into his quarters at Balliol, he wrote, "My room here is small, but cheerful on the whole; unfortunately there are some noisy

persons on the stair. I must just be as indifferent to their din as possible. I like the teachers that I have to do with. I was well received by Woolcombe, with whom I came in contact first. He appears benevolent, though a divine. . . . With Riddell, an exceedingly modest, pleasant person, I am reading *Aeschines contra Ctesiphon*, which makes a good supplement to my former study of the *De Corona*. Palmer is at the 'Histories' of Tacitus, an equally appropriate continuation of the 'Annals.' He is the catechetical lecturer at present. Jowett is, I think, the best of them all; certainly the wisest. He took me to-day to some broad meadow on the eastern side of the town, and tried to find out what I was; found out a good deal not much to his satisfaction, and told me a great deal of truth. I assumed more than natural opposition in my arguments τὰ ἀληθῆ ἐξετάζειν."

This was the beginning of a friendship which continued unbroken till Jowett's death; and the two last sentences give a suggestive picture in miniature of both the men. During the early years of their acquaintance the late Master of Balliol was, as is well known, the victim of a most unworthy persecution, by the High Church party in the University, on account of his religious opinions. It was in itself sufficient to arouse the enthusiasm of one who was ever eager to enter the arena of controversy; and to do so by preference on behalf of what was, or appeared to be, the weaker side. "Ah, you never knew Jowett in his prime, when he was fighting the world," Nichol used to say to the undergraduates of a younger generation, when he was speaking of the teacher whom he always regarded with reverent affection, even when he could not assent to some of his ideals.[1]

Part of a letter from one of his earliest friends—now the Master of Balliol—may here be quoted. It was written from Oxford, and from the Union, to Nichol then resident in Glasgow.

"Ichabod! I am sorry to tell you that the enemy hath prevailed again, and Jowett is as far from his salary as

[1] See in *The Death of Themistocles and other Poems*, the two sonnets entitled "The Teacher" and "Crowned."

ever. Again an even vote, which is equivalent to rejection.

"How I wish you had been up to hear Stanley's noble sermon on Sunday last, with its picture of Oxford as it is, and as it might be, and above all to hear his eloquent tribute to our dear friend. I hope it will soon be published; and if it is, before I leave, I will send you a copy. The University turned out to hear it better than I have ever seen it do before. I said to Jowett after, 'who will sing us battle songs any more?' 'We must carry on the fight though,' said he, looking as pertinacious, and as saintly-wicked as usual."

Shortly after the last extract made from his Journal Nichol wrote: "I have no more notes of this time except of my trip to Salisbury. The 'couleur de rose' soon faded; and *I began to know Oxford, and to hate it.*"

This expression of distaste for his new environment—vehemently underscored in the original MS.—certainly did not apply to the later period of his Oxford undergraduate days; but, while it remained true, its author would seem to have received at least occasional sympathy from a quarter where he might hardly have expected to find it. Walking one day with Jowett near Oxford, they discussed the University and its system, its merits and defects; when Jowett, suddenly flinging his stick on the ground before him, exclaimed, "I hate the place." In later years Nichol sometimes startled younger auditors with this anecdote, although he probably never recalled it to the recollection of the Master.

The maturer experience, and general coolness of temperament, which belong to a teacher often control the effervescence of a pupil's youthful enthusiasm. In the autobiographical sketch of his early years Nichol related in what circumstances he was advised to "study the particle ἄν." Another instance of the cold academic *douche* may be found sufficiently amusing to be added here. Nichol was one of the earliest in his generation to discover the philosophical merits of the poetry of Browning, and he seems at this period of his life to have been addicted to proselytism on the subject. "At wine" with

Jowett one evening, he broke forth in praise of the poet. He waxed eloquent over his psychological subtlety, the vigour of his dramatic characterization, etc. His host and teacher heard him patiently, then quietly remarked, "Tom Moore is a greater poet than Browning!" which brought the discussion to a somewhat chilling close. Years afterwards, while his opinion of Browning had certainly not risen in the interval, he recalled this conversation to the Master of Balliol, whose estimate of Browning's merits had risen very considerably. The reply came, brief and unperturbed, "Did I say that?"

In the meantime Nichol at Oxford regretted Glasgow, and his Glasgow friends; and his Glasgow friends regretted him, as the following extracts from letters addressed to him by George Palmer, the brilliant Welsh fellow-student, who died young, will suffice to show:

"My dear Friend,—Pleasant memories of old times have come upon me this week accountably enough. An evening with Ross, the gaunt and impetuous Liberal, could not fail to do this. Sitting around his quiet fire we spent a very merry evening, though now and then our laughter was silenced into the bass-tone, while indulging in speculations about the vexed questions of Philosophy and Religion. A feeling of discontentment, of sorrow indeed, was all the while weaving itself into the train of thought. I could not help thinking of the time and circumstances which brought me to know some of my best friends, of the impossibility of having these times over again. Two years ago perhaps this very night, we were sitting up at that now sullen, silent Observatory, a ring of happy souls, 'turning to mirth all things of earth.' But now there is no more young enthusiasm, no more happy re-unions. You are gone to old England, and I see no prospect of your return." . . .

And again,

"But even now I wait the day of your return, when a happy re-union will give to affection a new strength. What would have become of me had I not had the ineffable fortune of connecting myself with you on my coming to Glasgow, and of maturing by a firmer connection that well-timed friendship, none can tell."

On June 1st, 1855, Nichol wrote in his Journal: "Time wears on, with its swift pinions, here as elsewhere; and little by little I grow assimilated to the new world that surrounds me, and the ways of it. Fortitude and perseverance must bear me on through the difficulties and discouragements of an altered position of life; and make me forget the fall I am sensible of, in coming from a region where I was at least well known, to one where my existence and action are mainly matters of indifference. Let me take to heart all profitable lessons of humility, yet never be my inheritance resigned for any weakness that effort may overcome. Thus feeling, and asking strength in prayer, there is ascension for me yet, in the store of the future. . . . I listen to the gorgeous and full swell of the organ, as it rises and falls with the choral chaunt through my window on this quiet afternoon, and the music carries back my spirit to old times. Ah! by my love to those old days—not yet decayed, nay, all immoveable—to the meadows and suns of the past, the streams of old and the friends that smiled beside them—chaunting now beyond the deep waters, and loitering in ampler fields—may I make the future from this hour more worthy of their memory. Gathering up the experience of my weakness, the recollection of my constant falls, let me not forget what I have done, and felt of the noble and true, when my heart was purer than now,

> **And power was with me in the night**
> **To face the darkness."**

When he returned to Glasgow for the summer vacation, he wrote:

"Much remains as I left it, here, and in the city. The Observatory has not been burnt down by the fire—no, nor even have the green grasses been charred, as I apprehended—but it stands, grey and stately, destined to outlive us all. The garden is fair, putting on its brightest robes, with lilac and laburnum blooming in luxuriant rows, and the song of larks above proclaims a holiday. Clyde, the great old dog, is fond as ever, but getting staid and staider as he sinks, poor dog, into his quiet old age.

Shall I speak of human things, and say how well and beaming is my father, how kind Elizabeth,[1] how sweet my sister's smile? Much too that lived and breathed around me is now no more, or but a solemn memory of the past. Those years do not depart alone, but each retires arm in arm with some cherished friend. Terrible and sudden was the death of Dr. J. Couper, one whom, among the Professors, I at once respected and admired, as few others: quiet and gentle, why was there none to heal him whose kind hand has healed so many? But sadder yet, and more mysterious to me, was the departure of one whom the world stood in sore need of, young, vigorous, wise, and honest in all noble thought and deed; rarely have I met one so universally admired and respected as Robert Lambie. Once only before has such a vacancy been made in the intimate circle of my friends. Ah! last year, Hain gone too, and we talked metaphysics together."

In October, Nichol was again in Oxford for the Michaelmas term, and wrote: "Woolcombe's lecture to-day nearly killed me. Really he is a kind man, but to the most distressing extent devoid of all notions of order, method, or subordination of little things to great. We were reading those glorious chapters of St. John about the Last Supper; he spent the whole hour in enforcing the necessity of recollecting how often certain words were to be met with. What an idolatry this is! I had to rest for a considerable time to-day reading Addison. . . . I have sent off my rambling review of *Maud*, the amusement of more hours than I could well spare. I have also finished the first two volumes of *The Spectator*. What a delightful thing it must have been to have had one of those delectable papers laid on one's table every morning, fresh from the hand of the sage quiet gossip, who sat smoking in his little garret hard by."

Sir William Rowan Hamilton was one of Nichol's

[1] *I.e.* Mrs. E. P. Nichol, for, with her consent and approval, he always addressed his father's second wife by her Christian name, as a token of affection; the word "mother" being, as she fully understood, sacred to her who was with him no longer.

father's friends, and became, on the occasion of his visits to the Observatory, a friend of the son also. During his undergraduate years at Oxford he kept up a correspondence with Sir W. R. Hamilton, but the majority of these letters have reference to scientific subjects, and in one of them Nichol modestly disclaims any special knowledge of science.

The following, however, has a wider interest:

BALL. COLL., Dec. 1st, 1855.

Dear Sir William Hamilton,—If it appears ungrateful that I should even now answer your last letter to me shortly and inadequately, I trust you will not refuse to believe that I read it with admiration and thankfulness,—thankfulness for the spur of a noble example, and the picture set before me of the rich rewards of a pure life. Purity of thought and deed is the only true receipt for keeping the heart young; how many high souls are shrivelled by the absence of this into dry despair and listlessness! Blessed are they whose spirits soar on their own free wings above the baser vices of the world, and happy too are they who with weak hearts, like myself, have been guarded safe from the worst of them, by no merit of their own, but by kindly fate or the inspiration of some divine presence. You would perceive, I dare say, that I did not send you that review of Tennyson's beautiful poem from any conception that it was satisfactory or complete as a review; but rather because I have made it the occasion of expressing some of my own mental experience, which I thought you ought to know, as a small return for the frank confidence with which you have entrusted me. I think you understood this, especially from the portion of Aubrey de Vere's letter which you have enclosed, alluding as it does to the 'beautiful vision' with which all lives worth living have been somewhile brightened, most of them, alas! to be saddened by its withdrawal,—oh! not for ever, nor unto a vague divine glory, but to reappear with its human love beyond the stars. I have expressed my sympathy before with much that your friend has written; his words here too are beautiful, but I must dare to say his thoughts are far from mine. This is a theme on which I am in nowise

fit to dwell, but do you recollect a grand passage of De Quincey's, in which he tells of the agony with which, when a child, shortly after his sister's death, hearing a clergyman solemnly pronounce the dread words, "And we shall all be changed," he cried out, "Oh! no, no!" I have loved the old man for that ever since; for the conception of change passing over the things we love is one of the horrors that haunt me, till I too call out, "Oh! no, no!" Yet even the stars have a majestic progress: why may not the souls of the great departed advance for ever in the Empyrean? The solution surely is that we too must never cease running the race that is before us, so that we fall not out of sight of their glory. . . . Time runs quickly, and in another fortnight I shall be again in the "Starry Tower." I am so fond of it, that I am ever sorrowful when I leave it. How unfortunate it is to have such a cat's attachment to places! I am slow of taking root, and am not yet so fixed to old Balliol as to feel it a home of mine. I generally carry the same caution to an extreme in forming new friends, and it is a long time before I can bring myself to any interchange of confidence. Therefore the more grateful is a certain glaring exception to this psychological law of mine. Leaving you with this enigma,—I remain, yours affectionately,

JOHN NICHOL.

On the last day of the year 1855 the Crimean war was not yet wholly over. Nichol wrote in his Diary: "The year which has sped away into the eternities of the past has been a broken and struggling, yet not altogether unprofitable, one. I sit by the flickering fireside while it dies, with thoughts into which the sounds of revelry cannot intrude, for it is a solemn thing this border-land, this passing of the old months into the record of bygone time. Of the broken lights and shapes amid which we have moved, how many will remain with an abiding influence on our lives? Of the faces that have flashed across our path, how many will glide away forgotten, while others haunt our memory with a spell? . . . The chimes are ringing now, and the year is gone. Ah, well-a-day, adieu! . . . It has had

its seedtime and its harvest for nations and for men, its plans long laid and battles bravely won, its heroic triumphs and its dark defeats, its joys and sorrows by the camp fire and by the hearth at home. The future is clouded with mist, and we know not what shall be—nay, not the issues of an unborn day. . . . May the great God, whose hand is over all, who lifteth up and casteth down, point to the leaders of our people the path of honour and justice; and may He, who only can, inspire them with the energy to walk in that way, whether it be lined with the artillery of hostile ranks, or overhung by the olive branches of a prosperous peace. May He give also strength to my weakness to pursue patiently the path now clearing before me, holding in all weather fast by the truth, dismissing the clouds of doubt and fear, and treading down passion, and envy, and sloth."

There is little to record in regard to the year 1856. Previous to passing "Moderations," Nichol found his work at Oxford irksome, and as yet he had not created for himself a sympathetic circle of friends. "Oh, it is weary here," he wrote in February, "in the winter nights when one is ill. Health is a blessing above all things in a stranger land. In a circle where love lives and reigns, there is a foolish luxury even in the very fact of weakness,—one is so soothed by the touch of tender hands and the solicitude of all around. Sometimes it seems almost worth while to be ill in order to be nursed well again by those companions, but here my fire and my book are my best companions. I gaze at the one, and memories of home make me sad; memories golden-tinged with the recollection of earlier and brighter days. I cannot say whence it came, but there flitted an image before me of a gentle boy with flaxen locks, kneeling before the figure of her—the divine one—while she gazed into his eyes with hers, and I forgot all else. Oh, foolish me! why need I ask for another ideal in life than this; enough for weary years is that inspiration, would it but keep present before me. And have I not a fair resemblance of her still to worship and to guard? This she left me, is it not enough to do? And he too,

Apollo, with his stately calm above a heart of love, shall this example of strength, where he has been strong, not lure me onward?" The last sentence refers to his father.

The following (April, 1856) records his impression of a first meeting with Carlyle—whose critical biography in the "English Men of Letters" Series was the last considerable work of his life. "I have seen him at length, and hardly, —as is the case with most of our idols—would I choose to un-see him again, this grand sullen Diogenes. I called, and, as a friend was waiting for him, we three walked out together along some of the quietest London streets, listening to a torrent of the purest Carlylese. Some things he said in the same savage way,—half coarse, half sublime, —in which he writes, that I would fain hope are sad exaggerations of a sad truth. Is the conclusion then to which this majestic mind has come, after all, only that the age is presided over by Bedlam, or is it not a melancholy proof that a hero may tell of deliverance from the 'Everlasting No,' and yet fall into it again himself? I left very sorrowful. I expected a calmer man, and one from whose presence more of consolation could be drawn."

Nichol continued in a manner which shows that he had for the moment caught the Carlylese infection. "Yet why should we be daunted by the gloom even of our profoundest prophets? Beyond them and above them all are the pole-stars shining, and thither, oh! thither tend our toil and struggle, our woes and pains. Pray that they shine on thee, thou weary one, and thou art strong again."

Writing to Sir William Rowan Hamilton about this time, he says:

"I must not delay longer returning to you the letter of Aubrey de Vere you so kindly sent me, with the assurance that it has increased the admiration I had previously conceived for him from several of his graceful poems. There is one sentence in the letter, which among others beautiful and true, expresses well a thought I have often dimly felt: 'We live in a world of shadows, but they are cast down from unseen realities.' It is in proportion surely as we feel this that we have faith and

strength to live nobly and well; when we forget this, as we often do, and believe for a season in shadows alone, then we despair, and faint, and fall. Among the many things for which we have need to exercise that divinest privilege of prayer is the belief in *reality*. I heard some fine music in the street the other day, drowned for the most part by the din of carts and cars, but giving indication ever and anon of its undercurrent of rich melody; and fantastically enough, yet the thought gave me comfort, I thought it was so in our lives."

Nichol attended, and occasionally spoke at, the Oxford University Union debates; and, in a letter to the last-named correspondent, expressed indignation at a motion proposed at a meeting of the Union: "That the widespread influence of the writings of Alfred Tennyson is the main cause of the present debased state of English poetry." This was probably meant as a stroke of humour; but, with his Northern intensity, Nichol did not realize that these Union debates were not always conducted, forty years ago, with that "high seriousness" which was a Scottish ideal.

In December, 1856, he contributed a criticism of Sydney Dobell's poetry, and of George Macdonald's *Within and Without*, to the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. The article was entitled, "Recent Poems and Plays."

As a record of the earlier months of 1857, the following extracts from his Journal, in reference to various subjects, may be quoted:

"Gibbon's account of himself is one of the most charming pieces of literary autobiography I have ever read. It gives one a vivid idea of the strength, grace, and free spirit of the great historian. 'Every man who rises above the common level has received two educations: the first from his teachers; the second, more personal and important, from himself.' Perhaps the most remarkable feature in Gibbon's career is the immense preponderance of this latter education, and hence the full claim he has to think for himself what he has learned for himself, and the weight of the blow he strikes at that dull University which would have taught him not to think at all. He impresses me at

first sight as among the most massive of men, and after this prelude I stand at the commencement of his great work, like the spectator in a drama before the folds of the curtain, when some rich overture has foreshadowed a tragedy of depth and power."

"Heard Thackeray on George III. Had I not expected more, I had not been disappointed; as it was, those artistic dissolving views seem to want a centre. They are the after-dinner talk of a man of genius."

A little later, on the same theme: "Thackeray has been lecturing here. I went, as he had advertised George IV.; it was again George III. Yet it bears a second hearing well. Many of those pictures are inimitable, and the end is very grand. The audience behaved with considerable vulgarity, laughing loudly at the mere jokes, and not appreciating his eloquence. His sarcastic allusions to the ante-Reform system excited much smothered indignation. 'When Selwyn could not be troubled to contest Sutherland, he had a quiet borough of his own.' 'I have told them to elect myself,' etc. 'Beastly ridicule,' broke in a good old Tory behind me. His praise of the middle classes roused the great anger of little men, and the reception, though not actually rude, showed that he had come to Oxford."

The note which follows this—animadverting on Scotch students who, on coming to an English University, fancy that, on touching such superior soil, they must strive to show that they were "to the manner born"—is perhaps, even now, not altogether out of date.

"Some of our newly-imported 'Snell' men have suddenly found out a wondrous hidden virtue in the haunts of Isis, a power which asserts itself in a generally exalting influence, an efficacy of culture passing from Dons as they limp through 'Quad,' or dandies as they paddle canoes about the Cherwell. The new way in which this rare Oxonian or English genius is developed seems to be mainly in the exquisite curl of the lip, or the superior dignity of the sneer. There is some hope even for mediocre honesty, in making some inroad upon the most stubborn orthodoxy of the Scottish student; but it would require

the years of Methuselah, joined to the wisdom of Solomon, to shame those starched pieces of buffoonery out of their strut and their slang."

"A crisis in our fortunes has passed like a dream. England is again all stirred by elections. My father has been requested to stand for Newcastle, and again as one of the new members for Glasgow. Some such chance as this I have long anticipated, and cannot deny that I looked forward to the possibility of a change in the course of his career with mingled feelings, in which pride and pleasure predominated. He would have found himself in a more congenial sphere, with powers of wider beneficence, and have won a yet more enduring name, even in the memories of this stubborn land."

The Professor of Astronomy—for reasons partly financial, and partly connected with his state of health—decided not to accept either invitation. As he had barely more than two years to live from this date, his refusal, in spite of his son's legitimate disappointment, had in any case little ultimate importance.

CHAPTER IV.

OXFORD: AND THE "OLD MORTALITY."

A MOST interesting reminiscence of Nichol's Oxford days is supplied by A. V. Dicey, Vinerian Professor of Law at Oxford. His knowledge of the man, and his appreciation of his character and work, are alike remarkable. He writes:

"I first made John Nichol's acquaintance in the autumn of 1854, when he came up to Balliol. Our acquaintance soon ripened into an intimate friendship, which continued till the day of his death.

"He came up to Oxford a year or two older than most of his contemporaries. He had, moreover, at that time a greater experience of life than generally falls to the lot of an undergraduate; and there seemed to the rest of us, and I think to himself, to be a greater difference in age between him and young men who, like myself and Swinburne, were more or less his University contemporaries, than in reality existed. I was rather surprised at the time of his death to find how nearly of the same age we were. Upon this point I specially insist, because, in my judgment, it influenced the whole of Nichol's career, certainly at Oxford, and to a considerable extent throughout his life.

"As I think of Nichol when I first knew him, I am more and more struck by two traits which distinguished him from all his University companions and friends.

"The first is that at the age when he came up to Oxford his intellectual and moral capacities were fully developed. I do not like to say that he was precocious,

because the term 'precocity' conveys an idea of immaturity, and therefore can hardly be treated as an expression of praise, and I do not the least wish to imply that Nichol's talents were in any way prematurely or imperfectly developed. What I do mean to assert is, that as a writer, a thinker, or a teacher, he possessed, say at 23 or 24, every quality by which he was distinguished in later life. To appreciate what this means one must have had some experience with regard to the writing of young men. The average power of producing articles written in tolerable English has, I am convinced, greatly increased in Oxford during the last thirty years. But, even now, the most promising young men hardly ever are masters of anything which can be called a style; and Nichol certainly wrote a clear and forcible style when he began his University career.

"The second trait, closely connected with the first, was the power of influencing his friends and companions. There never was a man who made more of friendship. He threw himself with zeal—one might almost say with passion—into the interests of his friends. Though sensitive, he was not reserved, with those at anyrate to whom he was bound by ties of affection or intimacy. He talked with freedom of his own opinions and convictions, and he elicited confidence in return. During my career at College, and for a considerable number of years after I left College, there was no one with whom I interchanged thoughts more freely, and the same thing might be said of each of the circle of friends whom Nichol gathered round him at Balliol. While he was a companion in sympathy, he occupied among men of his own University standing, something also of the position of a teacher. He was, as I have already pointed out, both in years and in character, older than his associates. He knew, with more or less intimacy, persons of eminence such as Mill, and especially Mazzini. He was, as was proved in later life, an extremely good teacher. Though I never read with him, I gained a great deal of instruction in logic from conversations with Nichol.

"But the real source of his influence was, I am con-

vinced, to be found much less in his intellectual powers than in the full and early development of his character. Throughout his life an opinion was with Nichol always a conviction, and for all his convictions he was at any moment prepared to do battle. This energy, combined with conspicuous honesty, had the greatest influence on his friends. He had moreover, as I have intimated, a special capacity for cultivating friendships and for forming social unions. There were at Balliol a certain number of us, such for example as G. R. Luke, T. H. Green, and Swinburne, who were united by a common intimacy with Nichol. This connection might have come to very little if he had not, after his manner, united us together in an essay-reading society, called—owing to an almost accidental joke about the ill health of some of its members—the 'Old Mortality.' For myself I may say that at least half of the pleasure and interest of my College life is due to the existence of the 'Old Mortality.' We met during term time once a week, read essays, and discussed every topic, religious or political, which interested us, and gradually formed a set of friends united in the main by their sympathies and by their opinions. The formation of the society was wholly due to Nichol, and if the names and careers of its members, many of whom are now dead, be studied, it will be found that he showed rare sagacity in bringing together men suited to form what I may call a College Club. I do not know that the essays read, or the discussions which followed, were on an average either better or worse than the writings or the conversation read or heard in other essay societies; but I am certain that very few small bodies—the 'Old Mortality' consisted originally of seven persons—ever exerted a more lasting or more beneficial influence on its members; and Nichol was the centre as well as the creator of the body. Very rarely do you find a young man who was so bent on giving expression to the feelings and convictions of himself and his associates. He stimulated social gatherings. He induced us to join in editing a magazine, which, though it contained one or two good articles by himself, by Swinburne, and by Luke,

naturally enough had not a long life. We attempted to increase its circulation by reporting and commenting upon the Debates of the Union. Why I know not, the Union of that day objected to having its debates reported, and made the reporting of them morally impossible. The cause, I incline to think, was one characteristic of Nichol, and I must in fairness add, of the 'Old Mortality'; we could not keep ourselves to the functions of impartial reporters. The accounts of the debates were, if my memory does not deceive me, more or less defences of speakers with whom we sympathized, and attacks on Conservatives to whom we were opposed. However this may have been, the one thing which any one should bear in mind who wishes to appreciate Nichol's career as a young man, is his capacity for influencing his friends and impressing upon them his own convictions.

"Three political topics especially interested Nichol and all the circle of which he was the centre—the cause of foreign nationalities, and especially of Italy, the crimes of Louis Napoleon, and the abolition of University Tests, as well as all restrictions on the freedom of opinion. In virtue of the strength of our opinions or feelings on these topics, which were the subject of daily, I might almost say of hourly, discussion, we considered ourselves advanced Radicals, not to say Republicans.

"As to foreign politics, Nichol was an ardent believer in Mazzini, and was, as he remained to the end of his life, an admirer of Kossuth. In common with most of us, except T. H. Green, he sympathized with the Crimean War, but thought it ought to have been turned into a systematic and revolutionary attack on Russia. He believed that England might have interposed for the protection of Hungary, and had, at that period of his life at any rate, no sympathy whatever with the foreign policy of the Manchester school.

"As regards Louis Napoleon we were all agreed. I see little reason to think we were wrong in our general estimate of the Emperor; but there is something amusing as I look back upon them, in the youthful vehemence of our denunciations, and in our constantly repeated and constantly

disappointed hopes of his downfall. No one of us had the sagacity to perceive the strength of his hold on the French people.

"With regard to University Tests we were certainly dealing with a matter, I may now say an abuse, with which we were well acquainted, and in the removal of which we had a real and personal interest. Between 1854 and 1874, while a man could take his degree and become a B.A. without signing any test, it was impossible for him to become an M.A., and therefore, with one or two rare exceptions, to hold a fellowship, without signing the Articles of the Church of England. At that time, any man who did well in the schools, that is to say got a first-class, had fair ground for hoping that he might obtain a fellowship, and to become the Fellow of a College was the natural object of every young man's ambition. We most of us were ardent believers in freedom of thought, and certainly without any leanings towards strict orthodoxy. Whether rightly or not, we nearly all of us in effect, with the exception of Nichol, treated the signature of the Articles as a way of stating that we were members of the Church of England, and did not belong to any other body. Nichol from the first, with characteristic boldness and decision, declined to have anything to do with the signature of tests. He did not become an M.A. till they were abolished; he thereby sacrificed all chance of a fellowship.

"Several things make this adherence to his own conviction of what was right specially creditable. His knowledge and his literary power would, if he had stood for fellowships, have made his election at some College or other a certainty. He specially appreciated the dignity and influence of a fellow's position; and, though he disbelieved in some of its doctrines, he certainly had no dislike to the Church of England. He was entirely without sympathy with any form of dissent, unless it were Unitarianism, and would, I believe, at the end of his life rather have belonged to the Church of England than to any other religious body. His determination to follow out his own path in this matter was one of the things which

most legitimately, I consider, increased his influence with his friends, and earned for him the respect of older men than himself.

"During his College career, Nichol would, I conceive, have described himself as in the main a disciple of John Mill. I can remember even now his intense delight in Mill's *Liberty*, and his pleasure in finding that I then sympathized with him in his admiration for the terms in which Mill has dedicated the book to his wife. It is, however, right to add that then, as always, he had a far greater admiration for Carlyle than I could share, and gradually became less and less in sympathy with Mill, except indeed on the subject of the American War. He was, as you probably know, an ardent supporter of the North, and my sympathy with him on this subject was in later years a great bond of union between us.

"Nichol, I rather conceive, had before he came up to Oxford acquired the character of a Radical at Glasgow, and we should all of us have been much astonished had any one questioned the Radicalism either of himself or of the 'Old Mortality.' Yet, as I look back on Nichol even as a young man, I doubt whether his Radicalism, I might almost say his interest in politics generally, was anything like so deep as he and we supposed.

"On many political topics he was really indifferent. He was certainly not a fervent believer in the extension of the suffrage, in vote by ballot, or in Disestablishment. As all his friends know, his dislike and distrust of the Free Church was sometimes so vehemently expressed as to have a touch of absurdity. Nor were he or most of his associates keenly interested in the sort of social movements to which now so much of the benevolence and zeal of young men and women is devoted. He was a strict political economist, and a rigid Malthusian. Certainly no form of Radicalism was at any time of his life less to his taste than the Gladstonian Radicalism, which has prevailed from 1870 to the present time. I do not think he would have opposed the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, but it gave him no pleasure. I dwell upon this because I am convinced that

with Nichol, as with most other men, a consistency, not perhaps of opinion but of feeling, ran through his whole life. But this line of thought leads me too far away from Nichol in his College days. It is a pleasure to recall the strength of his feelings, his genial and generous appreciation of his friends, and the immense influence which, owing to these qualities, he exerted over men not much younger than himself. The only two men among his associates who in this matter at all equalled him were G. R. Luke and T. H. Green; and it was one of Nichol's services to us all that he formed the Society which linked himself, Green, Luke, and a few others, indissolubly together."

In these Oxford days Nichol's charm as a conversationalist was known to all his friends. It was bright, trenchant, genial, incisive; with perhaps occasionally just a slight *soupçon* of that bitterness which his disappointments in later life, with men and things, imparted to some of his future literary judgments. But, as a tutor at Oxford, he had no rival in his time. One of his pupils, who obtained a first in Greats, wrote to him from Oxford in 1868 . . . "I am very conscious of two people's influence in the Examination. Your 'History of Philosophy' and some lectures on Aristotle, by a tutor at Univ., with whom I read in summer."

The bugbear "Moderations" being passed, Nichol made many friends in Oxford, who remained friends throughout life. In various pages of his "Journal" he referred to his first acquaintance with Albert V. Dicey, Algernon C. Swinburne, George Rankine Luke, Birkbeck Hill, and others.

In June, 1857, he wrote: "I have succeeded in settling upon a distinct basis a Society which I originated towards the close of the last term of my residence here. We have weekly meetings for the purpose of reading either extracts from some of our standard authors, or some original essay. This is followed by an hour or two of conversation and criticism upon the subject started in the theme. It may prove useful in cultivating our taste, as well as helping us to make more definite our opinions on some of those vexed

questions, whether of Art or of Social Science, which are continually recurring. Its usefulness and perpetuity will depend entirely on the amount of judgment shown in the subjects which are selected, the power displayed in arranging them, and the manner in which our conversations are conducted. There is abundant material for selection in many fields, which will afford at once instruction and entertainment; and if there are not many among us who have such a command over the English language as to write a really good essay, there are many questions to which one or other of us have devoted some special attention, and the discussion of which may prove interesting to all. I will do my best to let it maintain the standard which I am anxious it should keep up."

As this Society—already referred to by Mr. Dicey—attained a position almost unique in Oxford, both from its aims and aspirations, and from the number of distinguished men who belonged to it, the official record of its foundation, and the minutes of its meetings which bear upon its originator and founder, may be quoted in this chapter.

The account of its origin is written in a hand which is certainly not Nichol's, and it suggests a boyish exuberance of high spirits which he did not share. It is as follows:

"A history of the institution of 'Old Mortality.' In the year of grace MDCCCLVI., in the month of November: Whereas a company of scholars and students of the University of Oxford was assembled for purposes of sober and intellectual pastime in the rooms of one John Nichol of Balliol College: It was proposed by the said John Nichol to the company aforesaid, that a society be instituted from among the present students of Balliol College and others their friends and comrades in the University of Oxford, for the purpose of affording one another such intellectual pastime and recreation as should seem most suitable and agreeable to the members of the same; and that the society should consist of such members of the present company as should be willing to enrol themselves therein without delay, and with the power of adding to their number as should seem fit. And whereas the said proposal was joyfully and gladly received and consented

J. PAYNE. (Magdalen)
HOOLE. (Queens.)
G. R. LUKE. (Balliol.)
T. H. GREEN. (Balliol.)
A. C. SWINBURNE. (Balliol.)
JOHN NICHOL. (Balliol.)
JAMES BRYCE. (Trinity.)
A. V. DICEY. (Balliol.)
ÆNEAS MACKAY. (University.)
T. H. HOLLAND. (Magdalen.)

unto by the majority of the company then present, the following gentlemen, students of the University of Oxford, did signify their consent to join, and were presently enrolled into the society aforesaid, viz.: Mr. Albert Venn Dicey, Balliol; Mr. George B. Hill, Pembroke; Mr. John Nichol, Balliol; Mr. Algernon S. Grenfell, Balliol; Mr. George Rankine Luke, Balliol; Mr. Algernon C. Swinburne, Balliol. And whereas, after much bethinking themselves as to how the said society should be styled and entitled, the name of 'Old Mortality' was suggested as appropriate, from the following weighty considerations: That every member of the aforesaid society was, or had lately been, in so weak and precarious a condition of bodily health as plainly and manifestly to instance the great frailties, and so to speak, mortality of this our human life and constitution—this name therefore was afterwards formally adopted by a law of the society as its future style and title.

"The society then proceeded on the ensuing Saturday to the ordinary business for which it had been instituted, in the listening to a passage from a modern English author, publicly read before the society by one of the members aforesaid. But whereas from the unforeseen absence from ill-health of the original proposer and founder of the said society, which absence lasted until the end of the next term thereafter ensuing, no full meeting of the society was convened until the 2nd of May, 1857, the formal rules and regulations of the society were not till then drawn up and presented to the same; but after that, in the intervening space, without the drawing up of such rules meetings had been held, and two new members had been admitted, viz., Mr. Reginald Broughton, Balliol; Mr. Robert S. Wright, Balliol; it was deemed expedient on the return of the said Mr. John Nichol at the first aforesaid general meeting of the society, which took place on the 2nd of May, in the rooms of the aforesaid Mr. John Nichol, to propose to the society's consideration and votes the following fourteen rules and regulations, which were accordingly passed by the society."

The only one of the "fourteen rules and regulations" of the Society now worth citing is that which states "that

this society have for its object the stimulating and promoting of the interchange of thought among its members, on the more general questions of Literature, Philosophy, and Science, as well as the diffusion of a correct knowledge and critical appreciation of our standard English authors."

The minutes of the society's meetings, in which its founder's name occurs, are as follows:

"Saturday, May 2nd, 1857. Mr. John Nichol in the chair. After private business, till a late hour, an essay was read by Mr. Nichol, viz., an Essay in Defence of Suicide, by David Hume. Discussion on the subject took place for some time, but no vote was passed."

"Saturday, May 16th, 1857. Mr. George Luke in the chair. After private business, extracts were read by Mr. Luke comparing instances of the fanatical revival of Communism from Robertson's *Charles V.*; *the Anabaptists of Munster*; Robertson's *History of America*; *the first Puritan settlement at New Plymouth.* Mr. Nichol expressed his opinions at very considerable length, and some discussion ensued, but no vote was passed."

"Saturday evening, November 7th. Mr. Nichol, of Balliol, in the chair. Mr. Bryce, of Trinity, proposed by Mr. Luke, and seconded by Mr. Nichol, was unanimously elected a member of the society. Mr. Nichol then proceeded to read an essay on Wycliffe, considered as a reformer. Discussion followed on the subject of the essay."

"Saturday, 15th January, 1858. Mr. Nichol, of Balliol, in the chair. He read a short essay on the character of Cicero as a statesman."

'Saturday, February 13th. Mr. Nichol, of Balliol, in the chair. A series of extracts were read to illustrate the peculiar merits of the great English satirists. They were chosen from the *Dunciad* of Pope, Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, and Byron's *Don Juan*, and accompanied with some remarks on their distinctive characteristics. A discussion followed, in which a variety of opinions were passed on the poets generally and their rank as satirists; Mr. Swinburne, among others, recording his decided preference for Dryden, Mr. Broughton admiring the variety and rich humour of the extracts from Byron, while Mr.

Dicey found most congenial the brilliant antitheses of Pope."

"Saturday, October, 1858. Meeting in Mr. Nichol's rooms. Mr. Green, of Balliol, in the chair.[1] Mr. Holland, of Magdalen, proposed by Mr. Dicey, seconded by Mr. Nichol, was elected a member of the society."

"Saturday, December, 1858. This meeting was held in Mr. Green's rooms. Mr. Nichol, of Balliol, in the chair."

"Mr. Nichol read an essay on 'The danger of unduly exalting Strength and Success, with particular reference to the tone of feeling pervading Carlyle's history of Frederick of Prussia.' The origin and dangerous consequences of the idea that might is right were traced and displayed with great force and copiousness of illustration. In the discussion which followed general agreement with the sentiments of the essay, as well as great admiration of its style, was expressed by most of the members present."

In the last list of the members of the "Old Mortality" Society, which is given in the book that belonged to Mr. Nichol, the name of Æneas Mackay, afterwards Professor of Law at Edinburgh, and now Sheriff of Fife, is the only one to be added to those already mentioned. But the "Old Mortality" continued to exist for some time after its founder had left Oxford, including, in later years, among many others, the present Master of Balliol, Mr. W. H. Pater, Mr. Nettleship, Mr. Bywater, now Regius Professor of Greek, and Mr. Berkley.

A very interesting photograph of the original group of the "Old Mortality" exists. Mr. Dicey writes: "The society, on the whole, justified itself by the subsequent career of its members. By those who were either original members, or were elected during its earlier years, at least seven Professorships, one place in the Cabinet, one Judgeship, and two headships of Colleges have been filled. The tendency of the O. M. towards professorial positions is marked, and, I think, might have been anticipated by any older man of experience who had intimately known the society and its members."

[1] Mr. T. H. Green had been in the meantime elected a member of the society.

Mr. Luke wrote to Nichol on Feb. 14, 1857.

BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

My Dear Nichol,— . . . The "Old Mortality" is in a most shocking state of vigour. I suspect all its ailments have settled upon your head. Hooraay! Hoooray!! . . .

Dicey says something about your going in for honours in Moderations. You would have been quite safe for a first, if you had been strong; and if you still think of it you might make out the reading for it yet. But is it worth your while? It is no honour at all; it is very laborious; and any sacrifice that you might make of time or strength for it would tell against you in Greats, where really both profit and distinction can be gained—*i.e.* as Oxford things go—and besides the subject is a more congenial one to a Scot. Dicey tells me that he thinks you should only go in for a pass, and I most entirely agree with him. You will have had *all the profit of the reading*, and neither lost nor gained in point of credit; unless your having read for a class lifts you into an Honorary 4th, which men here look upon as "cheesey."

How are your friends at home? How is Lushington? Caird is at St. Andrews—enjoying it—delivered from St. Rollox and the Glasgow Divinity Hall. . . . Yours very truly, G. R. LUKE.

The Rev. W. Berkley, one of the members of the "Old Mortality," writes thus from Navestock Vicarage, Romford, Essex:

"John Nichol was well known some thirty-five years ago as the most successful coach for Greats of his day, especially in Philosophy. It was in this capacity that I first made his acquaintance, when reading for my degree in 1860, and it would be difficult to overestimate the value of his assistance. What was most characteristic of him was his much wider knowledge of Modern Philosophy, derived at first hand from German sources. Plato and Aristotle have, from time immemorial, been the centres of Oxford study: with strong traditions inherited from the Schoolmen. Kant and Hegel were new names to most of us, and we got our first

introduction to them from Nichol. His strong Scotch logic too was no ordinary force, at a time when Mansel's Bampton lectures waged the war of orthodoxy with the sword of Sir W. Hamilton.

"My own recollection of Nichol, as an intimate personal friend, is however much more closely bound up with the foundation of the 'Old Mortality' and the earlier days of its existence. It was a speculative club that had its origin in Balliol, and Nichol was its founder. When elected in 1860 I can recall the initial ceremony of introduction with the reading out of its constitution. This included the explanation of its title O. M. as descriptive of the 'physical infirmity of all its original members.' It was certainly not an athletic society; but I do not myself recall any exceptional feebleness of body, though its strength lay rather in the speculative sphere. And though its origin was Balliol, no College had any preference afterwards. Its being's end and aim was philosophical discussion, and certainly its mental atmosphere was very keen. Those who stay on at the University after taking their degree must remember the sudden sense of blank, when all undergraduate friends of former days seem suddenly to disappear. Then one feels the value of a society like the O. M., which is a sort of second birth into a new Oxford. I remained in residence for three years, and I think the O. M. voted its own decease some years later.

"So much I recall of John Nichol, as my coach for Greats, as the founder and inspiring spirit of the O. M., and generally as one of the leaders of the young Oxford party, when we fought for the abolition of religious tests, and the endowment of the Greek Chair, which the country clergy came up each year to refuse to Professor Jowett.

"I must add one other word, the contrast between Jowett and Nichol. I do not, of course, compare the two in mental calibre. Jowett was a man of genius, and made the same kind of impression, though on a smaller circle, as J. H. Newman on the generation before. A few words in his printed works, or by way of criticism on one's own essay written for him, or perhaps a chance remark in a walk, might live on

and fructify. His most characteristic influence was as a solver or minimizer of *dogma*. Now the type of Nichol's mind was the very opposite: he was as dogmatic as the Shorter Catechism, or (for that matter) the Westminster Confession, though his dogmas were very different. His dogmas were his Philosophy. I am not sure that he was not rather impatient of a Philosophy that could not, or would not, cast itself into fixed forms, in which to be adjudicated upon. Jowett found truth everywhere, anywhere, by the intuition of guessing. Maurice seemed always to find it in the great Creeds and Confessions, though reading into them a meaning which seemed to most the very opposite of their own. Now Nichol spent his whole energy in drawing out clearly the lines of his philosophic faith; but this, be it always remembered, with an enthusiasm for free discussion (whether in theology or politics) which was perhaps his most distinctive feature.

"In that spirit he organized the O. M. I have since belonged to many societies, lay or clerical, but none has the same fascination for my memory as the 'Old Mortality.' I remember it was said of Pater that his speculative imagination seemed to make the lights burn blue. T. H. Green preached Hegel, with the accent of a Puritan. And what solemnity of authority could resist the edge of Dicey's epigram?

"In those days there were no married fellows, which was one reason why Nichol was not a fellow, but stayed on as a private tutor. In his house there was the grace and sweetness of lady-presence; how sweet and graceful those only know who knew Mrs. Nichol."

Sheriff Mackay writes of the Oxford days as follows:

"I read Logic with him one or probably two terms, in preparing for the final schools and found him a brilliant tutor, equally at home in Aristotle, Plato, Bacon, and Mill. His teaching was distinguished by clearness and precision, but most of all by emphasis: the power of putting into the pupil what he had himself acquired. I came to know him better in the 'Old Mortality' Society, of which he was, I believe, the founder; though Luke, T. H. Green the

philosopher, Swinburne the poet, and A. V. Dicey, were amongst the original members. They were all at Balliol, but the society was disposed to welcome recruits from other Colleges, of whom I remember best James Bryce of Trinity, T. H. Holland, and J. Payne of Magdalen, Walter Pater (afterwards Fellow of Brasenose), and Hoole, a student of Christ Church. The 'Old Mortality' did not differ from the many similar societies which spring up in all universities between men of kindred tastes. It did not swear allegiance to any master dead or living, although most of the Balliol men, and indeed all the others also, had felt the influence of Jowett, who was then the chief intellectual power in Oxford, stimulating every one to do his best, and criticizing from an armoury which seldom failed, the weak points in his pupils. But if the 'Old Mortality' had any special distinction from other societies, it was the absence of cliquishness and the admission of complete freedom of discussion. In all its discussions Nichol was the readiest and most frequent speaker, always well informed, always decided, and saved from dogmatism by bursts of humour which enabled him generally to see the other side of any subject. I specially remember his own essays on Carlyle, of whom he was a warm, but even then a discriminating, admirer."

The present Master of Balliol wrote:

"By some of the members of this society its meetings are remembered as the very salt of their university life. The free discussion of everything in heaven or earth, the fresh enjoyment of intellectual sympathy, the fearless intercommunion of spirits, the youthful faith that the key of truth lies very near to our hands, give a unique zest and charm to those meetings of students with students, before the inevitable parting of the ways of manhood has come. And I think that, at least to the older members of the Old Mortality Society, it is impossible to think of it apart from the image of Nichol as one who gave impetus and direction to the debates, who broke the ice and kindled the fire of controversy by the impetuous freedom of his own utterance. The great contest of North and South in the

United States was then beginning, and Nichol and Green showed themselves from the first well informed as to the nature of the struggle, and zealously maintained the justice of the Northern cause. They were, I think, among the first in this country to recognize the genius for democratic leadership which lay hid under the rough exterior and Yankee humour of Lincoln."

CHAPTER V.

LATER YEARS AT OXFORD.

Two letters, one descriptive of a voyage to Ireland, the other of an excursion in Skye, addressed to William Jack, then an undergraduate at Cambridge, may be added to the previous record of Nichol's life at Oxford. The first is as follows:

"Agnes and I got pitched, in going from Liverpool to Cork, in a stupid screw built for deck passengers. Let me warn you against taking ladies by that route; but on landing I found consolation in the sight of old friends and the memories of many years ago. Have you ever visited the native shores of your Irish friend? If not, 'there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio.' When you go, don't mince matters by the half-civilized Belfast or Dublin approach; cast aside all fear, arm yourself with a good revolver, and plunge *in medias res* into the midst of Paddydom, in the regions of the south-west wind. There are lakes and bays more luxuriant than England dreams of, the long range of the great Atlantic, pigs in all their glory, sunny isles in sunny seas, deep dark valleys with the voice of pines and cataracts, and overhanging crags and hills whose steep ascent rivals the ridges of our Scotch glens. There are glorious echoes at every turn, and guides who make you pay for them. Fine old legends, and finer yarns of yesterday's spinning about castles and cliffs, and who knows what! There are the finest ragamuffins in the world; men of a romantic Spanish complexion, oval features, and fascinating expression, living in mud cabins without windows or chimneys, clad in tatters

and swarming with fleas; they are moreover the greatest liars on the face of the earth. Then the women! Wonderful is the beauty of these 'peasant girls with bright *black* eyes, and hands which offer early flowers,' yea which run screaming after your cars insisting that you *shall* take early flowers for sixpence apiece, who follow you everywhere, who mob you in the glens and track you up the mountains with bog-oak and goats' milk, and cheap lace and poteen, with blessings or curses for your honour according as your honour gives them halfpence or does not give them halfpence, for they are beggars to the backbone, and the daughters of beggars. Poor Ireland, and yet a richer land never lay beneath the sun, waiting to bless the efforts of honest toil."

In Nichol's Journal, where a more detailed descriptive account of this tour is given, there is the following account of a Sunday morning spent at Limerick:

"In the forenoon we went to mass. The chapel is a comparatively poor one, and the service seemed meaningless to an uninitiated mind and eye, save those notes worthy of Grisi that were chanted from some sweet silvery voice above. But behind! O heavens, what a spectacle! There are a thousand poor people crowded together to gaze on these ceremonies in the firm belief that, when that priest's robe is lifted, the mystery of their hearts is unveiled, that on the breaking of that wafer depends the salvation of their souls. Would we who are not Catholics were half as faithful, would we were half as much in earnest as these ragged creatures who are counting their beads, and shuddering and beating their breasts, as these hard men who will, in some rude town of the Shannon, shed torrents of tears when a band of stupid monks passes by."

The second of the two letters is as follows:

"OBSERVATORY, 3rd Sept., 1857.

"My Dear Jack,—Did you ever experience, after some days' continuous walking, a certain difficulty in sitting still? It seems natural that a certain number of miles should be gone over before dinner, and I keep pacing the hall to

the detriment of this letter of yours. Swinburne has been with me for a fortnight or so, and we have just returned from a trip to Skye. Shall I again undertake the office of a guide-book, and tell you something about it? Well, we have been little more than a week away, and it seems a couple of months at least. You might persuade me that I have been round the Cape and back again, so utterly have we felt ourselves in strange lands of heather and sea, and hills and perpetual Gaelic. You know the sail to Oban, how grand it is. Beyond the point of Ardnamurchan it is grander still, a wider ocean and higher mountains stretch behind long reefs of barren rock; the Coolin hills, the mountains of Rum, and the crags of Eig, form a complete amphitheatre of magnificence. In Skye itself certainly the most wonderful spectacles are the bay of Scavaig, and the head of Coruisk. Imagine a deeper Glen Sannox, hemmed in by more tremendous crags, jet black and lowering, with a bluish-grey lake like Acheron beneath them, with the floating mists like dread phantoms of evil spirits around it, and you have a faint idea of Coruisk. The splintered shafts of the Coolin hills seem to rise right from the entrance of the bay. It is best seen as we saw it from a boat lying a little way from the landing, but at every turn there is some new sublimity.

"We climbed Blaven, the highest peak in Skye,[1] with no great danger. But, if you are ever in the north of Skye, don't try to get up Quiraing without a guide. Crosskey and I succeeded, but we were very glad to get down again with cartloads of stones accompanying us. . . . Our farthest point was Uig, a city of farms. Crosskey and I came tumbling into it at night about eleven, having walked from the Storr! Swinburne had gone on before by the main road to secure beds, but how to find the inn was the mystery. We asked every passer-by in the dark, but they were mostly girls, who ran away scared, shouting, "No English." After much labour we alighted on the inn. It looked like a stable, or rather a byre. We got in, however, and found Swinburne waiting for us. . . . Meanwhile, bear in mind a good impression of the shed-inn at Uig.

[1] This is not correct. Sgurr-nan-Gillean is higher

We had cream and butter, and ham and eggs, yea lamb chops and tea, which I defy any house in London to show up on silver plate. We slept well and fared well, and next day left in a dog-cart for Portree. We had some accidents, but on the whole the sky(e) favoured us miraculously. Swinburne says we ran a Muck once or twice, and were like to have made a Mull of the affair, but on the whole it was a Rum go! The desecrated and insulted islands will yet arise in judgment against him. We had only one wet day, and that gave us an opportunity of testing the hospitality of the natives. We went into a gentleman's house to inquire the way to a yacht towards which we were bent, and he would not let us away till next morning when the weather was fine. I had barely an introduction to him, but this sort of generosity is not uncommon here. On the other hand, guides and boatmen have their wits well sharpened by tourist corruption, and 'the cry of the children' is something to be heard along the road, though not to the same extent as in Ireland."

After 1857 Nichol's Journal was less carefully kept, and the letters of his that are preserved and available are scarce. He says of the year 1858:

"I kept no journal of this year; my letters are scattered among the various persons to whom they were addressed. I was weary of recounting the same round of incident, and doubtful of the good effect of the self analysis fostered by a transcript of my changeful moods. Yet it was the most important year of my residence at Oxford. I had got over the work I found uninteresting, and found myself suddenly in pleasant and familiar fields, when I passed from conjugating verbs to following arguments, from writing Greek prose and Latin verse to the intelligent study of Thucydides and Plato. I had to repeat what I had done five years before at Glasgow, when my aim was not to write like the Greeks and Romans, but to understand their history and illustrate their thought. . . . I did not return in the Easter vacation of this year, but stayed at Oxford, with the interruption of a week spent with some friends in Kent, from the middle of January till near the close of June.

"From Jowett I got every assistance in my studies of Plato and Greek philosophy that one, whose genius for Philosophy was only matched by his genius for teaching, could give. He gave me advice, assistance, encouragement, like the wisest of instructors and the best of friends. To him, and to the lectures of W. L. Newman, I owe all I was really taught at Oxford. I speak of tutorial instruction. I had striking lights thrown upon certain important points of history by Professor Vaughan, whose successor is as eloquent without being equally original. Max Müller's lectures were so full of talent that they almost gave me an interest in Philology, and Mr. Philips led me again over my old favourite ground in his class-room, and I went to seek fossils with him on his excursion days. The criticisms of Matthew Arnold as Professor of Poetry went along with his *Merope* to give me a much lower opinion of him than I used to have. When I came to know Greek better I found him little more than an exquisite imitator. He knows Sophocles, but it is to the exclusion of Shakespeare, and his judgment is as much reactionary and partial as that of Rossetti and the pre-Raphaelites. They both move back, only in different directions.[1] I gave my opinion on this and some other subjects more at length in a series of literary and political papers which I edited during those two terms, and which from the exceptional character of the views advocated by myself and the circle of my friends made some talk in Oxford. These *Undergraduate Papers* were the organ of the 'Old Mortality' as far as it thought fit to make itself public. I wrote several articles, as 'Louis Napoleon,' 'Wycliffe,' 'Love and Marriage,' 'Locke,' 'Merope,' 'Mazzini,' which amused my leisure hours. The magazine fell, but our literary evenings were continued as briskly as ever, and it was now for the first time that I began to feel myself one of a circle similar to that which had so often met over supper at our Noctes Ambrosianæ at Glasgow.

[1] Nichol ultimately entertained a much higher opinion of Matthew Arnold than is here expressed; but it may be noted that a similar view in regard to Arnold's lectures as Professor of Poetry was taken by Mr. Swinburne at this time, in an article entitled "Modern Hellenism," contributed to *Undergraduate Papers*.

These terms were out of sight the most agreeable I had spent at Oxford."

The following sentence, from a letter written to his sister in April, supplements what is written in his Journal in reference to his Oxford teachers: "I get to know more and more of Newman, and like him, next to Jowett, better than any one else I have met here among my seniors. He has besides more enthusiasm than Jowett, and wider, though not deeper, sympathies."

In the autumn of 1858, Nichol took his sister to Hildesheim, in Hanover; where she went, for a few months, to study Music and German.

He wrote to her from Oxford in November:

"Winter has set in here too. The moon looks like a shining plate of ice to-night, and to-morrow it will be chill and misty till the sun breaks out at noon. If the cold is as great in proportion with you it must be intense indeed. I have from what you tell me, and those at home, a very complete idea of your new life. I should feel very dull indeed if I could not form some picture of it at the different hours of the day. . . . One thing my trip has taught me, that the rapid motion we are accustomed to in this rapid land does not suit with the Continent. It seems absurd to say so, but the genius of the land there is leisurely, and it is a mistake to strive against it. As to the outward details of my life here, I am more comfortable than usual, being left to attend what I please, and work at what I prefer. No one made any opposition to the plan of my staying at home next term, and only coming back to take my degree. I have secured my rooms here for the summer. Swinburne will step into my place when I am away, and withdraw to make room for me again when I return.

"Meanwhile I am working at History and Philosophy, and writing essays for Jowett. I have taken two to him of some length, and he has been pleased to express his approval pretty emphatically. He told me I should easily have got a first class, had I gone in this time; and I accept the compliment without reflection, for I am sure he is wrong! I may not get it next time. . . . Πάντα ῥεῖ,

everything flows, is the motto of one of the old sages I have been reading about. I am thinking now when I quote it of the changes here, and the various courses those of us who have wrought and thought together are about to take. Three of my friends have left this term, Grenfell, Hill, and Dr. Atkinson. I see their faces no more, and I feel the blank. Dicey has entered at Lincoln's Inn, as my father wished me to do this autumn. Luke, Broughton, and Green will take their degree along with me, they will get their fellowships in time, and I shall follow my path 'to New Americas, or wheresoever God wills.'"

On a Sunday in February, 1859, he wrote to her again from the Observatory:

"It is a gentle evening, with sunshine and summer sounds; the birds think it is spring, the sun is so balmy and clear. Yesterday there was rain and clouds and wind, now it is all bright and beautiful. The town is lying quietly beneath, with its church towers and bells; the hills with their white peaks are glittering beyond, under wreaths of purple and violet. . . . Yes, it is pleasant to write, whether in letters to those who love us, or in measured music to ourselves with nothing to say. Then the thoughts that come do not seem to come from earth, they come faster, freer, more deliciously: they run away with us; we do not run after them. It is only when they have left their record that we find, as if it were a wonder, that we *have* had something to say. Where has it come from? I know. From our hearts where it has been kept prisoner so long, shut up in bolts and bars, chained down by weariness and anxiety. Only now and then these bars are loosened, and the long captive fancies, the half stifled loves, take wing; and it is they who fly away with us, over hill top and valley. This is the meaning of inspiration; it is an opening of the heart, so that it may speak out boldly what it feels. Some hearts, like mine, are seldom opened. Others are always open, and have no time to gather up any treasures. Others, the grand ones, are open too; but there flows through them such a stream of being, they know and feel so much, that they are like a perpetual spring of living water.

There is a foundation for you, for a whole theory of poetry! . . .

"Crosskey gave us a pleasant sermon this forenoon. He said among other things: 'I sometimes think we should never have known God had we not been bound together in families. We do not know how close are the links that bind the members of a family together till one of them is broken. I never heard of a son or daughter in a family being lost or having gone astray, without being told at the same time that it was the favourite child.' There seemed to me in that remark something very touching and very true: he was touched himself, and his voice assumed a sweeter tone as he said it. These things do more good in a sermon than the most exact logic, or the most subtle metaphysics, which I am afraid would be too prevalent in my preaching, were I a preacher. I cannot often speak to men in that way: I am too much afraid of them, their general harshness and the 'wrinkled sneer,' which is alike deadly to themselves, and to those who might otherwise do them some good. It is a sort of cowardice, this excessive shyness, and yet it is hard to escape from it. The exteriors of men are so terribly cold; and yet there is in the hardest some well of tenderness, could one but reach it. E. tells me in one of her letters that I do not show myself as I am for a long time, that she is sure few people can know me, for I wear 'a mask of Scotch coldness, and reserve, and precision,' that it is impossible for most people to see through.

"I am half inclined to think it true, for I feel the wish often to wear such a mask, and perhaps I may have succeeded rather too well. . . . I can do without that sort of love, my child. I must do without it, if I follow the long road over cold grey stones to the craggy heights that my father points out for me; but I cannot do without a share of freedom, and the sense of living to some more purpose than I have lived during the past six years of my manhood. Manhood with the tasks of boyhood! that is near an end. Come what may, *that* is near an end. Meanwhile one more effort, to be followed, as is most likely, by one more failure. Never fear. I will stand that, like

a rock that has long been beaten by the salt sea, one buffet more will matter little; the sunshine of love is above the poor cliff still, and the green moss grows over it, and a little spring of song that bubbles up once in a year, and is sweet to the rock itself, though no one knows it is there."

The "one more effort" referred to in the foregoing letter was his examination for the "final schools," which had to be taken in June. He had still some thoughts of going to the Bar, a career which his father considered desirable for him; and in November, 1859, he was admitted a member of Gray's Inn. But, for various reasons, an academical life was thought more suitable; and to obtain a first class in the "finals" at Oxford was of great importance to him. Ill-health during the spring made him extremely nervous as to the result of the examination; and to encourage him the Master of Balliol wrote as follows:

MRS. COTTLE'S LODGINGS,
CLEVEDON, NEAR BRISTOL, April 14.

My dear Nichol,—Most men's chance of getting a first class depends on how much they read during the last two months. I think yours depends on how little. Shall I add some prescriptions for you:

(1) Never to read more than five or six hours a day, and to get all the exercise and relaxation that you possibly can. (2) Never to sit up after twelve. (3) To learn a few lines of Cicero by heart, and to copy out carefully a page of Greek, say the definitions of Aristotle, or some difficult places in Plato, every day. If you neglect No. 1 and 2 you will come to no good end.

I, and those who know you and Oxford, have no doubt of your obtaining a first class. Or, perhaps, I should say hardly any, for the doubt is only about your health.

This is an old story between us; but it is necessary to repeat it once more, for the last time, when you have so much need of health and nerves. The papers that you have done for me in Philosophy and History show me that you know far more than enough to get a first class, and

your translations were often excellent. But you may lose all power of putting things into form, by bad health and spirits.—Ever your sincere friend, B. JOWETT.

MRS. GILBANK'S, CHESTNUT HILL, KESWICK.

My dear Nichol,— . . . Should you break down in health—which I rather fear—shut up your books, and go for three weeks, or a month to the Highlands. I think you can spare a month—even if you go up this time. I have little doubt of your success. When you are ill, or depressed, you have a morbid desire to work. . . . You have sufficient ability to do anything you can want, and more than sufficient, if you will only acquire the power of sympathy, and sociability with others; not with a clique merely, or a few warm and attached friends, but with men in general, of all ranks and sorts. . . . Ever yours,

B. JOWETT.

CLEVEDON, until Wednesday.

My dear Nichol,— . . . About the theological examination I hardly know what to say. The reasons that I gave before seem to be good still. But if you think that the employment of a fortnight in getting up Divinity will unsettle you, and endanger your first class, I cannot urge you to pass it. . . . One ought not to have the springs of the will cut away by the nerves. But then comes the difficulty: it is not an ecstatic effort of the will that is wanted, but just quietness and peace and a trust in something beyond, even amid suffering and painful self-consciousness. To which I must add—though it is a sad anti-climax—air, and exercise, and regular hours. You certainly estimate yourself much lower than I, or any of your friends, would. . . . Ever yours, in haste, B. JOWETT.

Two other letters from the Master of Balliol may follow these:

ADDRESS, OXFORD, Dec. 28.

My dear Nichol,— . . . I would advise you also to take endless pains about "style," and write and re-write, not twice, but five or six times. I don't mean, of course, ordinary lectures, but anything which is to appear as a

finished composition with your name. Perfect simplicity and connection of style is an acquisition quite invaluable, and worth any money or pains—especially in your position. . . . In haste, ever most truly yours, B. JOWETT.

BALLIOL COLLEGE.

My dear Nichol,— . . . I don't think that I disagree with you really much about style. I chiefly mean that style is an endless interminable study, and that great strictness in taste is the first duty of a professsor. . . . I am, ever yours, B. JOWETT.

On May 16th, Nichol wrote in his diary: "By Birmingham to Oxford. Received with all kindness by my friends. Luke, Swinburne, Dicey, Grenfell, and others came to see me, and read to me when I could bear reading. I could hardly bear to read anything myself. Tried a little of Thirlwall and some Thucydides, but to little purpose. Dr. Symonds, finding that I must be examined, did what he could. Jowett, in walks and talks, tried to reassure me; and exaggerate my chances of success."

On 7th June, after the examination, he wrote, "To Cumnor with Swinburne. Edgar Poe, and green leaves. Chaucer in the evening. Jowett sends for me, to his inner room; rest on the sofa. Shouts without announce Riddell and the Class List. 1st Class—Green, Luke, Nichol ('Old Mortality'), Warner, and Warre. Dull misery for three days. No use. Must to London to hear 'Don Giovanni,' and visit and make love and dance."

He went to London; meeting, among others, Mazzini twice, and paying a second call on Carlyle, thus chronicled: "To Chelsea. Surly reception by Thomas, and Mrs. C.; I won't go there again till I am asked."

The later part of the summer was spent in Scotland; resting, and walking in the Highlands. Of one of these excursions, he wrote: "The walk was enlivened by troops of the native peasantry, in long lines and holiday dress, flocking to the great yearly communion. W. F. and I went to attend a service. Horrid high Calvinistic Free Churchism. I admired the Gaelic sermon with its drawling

notes much more; because I could not understand it! I admired the congregation, because I *could* understand the religious feeling which brought them there—youth, and manhood, and the last steps of age—to participate in the blessings of a Sacrament in which they believe. I admired, above all, the hymn; the low chant, and then the long chime, which fell on the ear like notes of wandering music from an Æolian harp, set in the amphitheatre of those rocks, a harp of which every string was a human voice, and every echo a human aspiration."

With his Oxford undergraduate career, just brought to a satisfactory conclusion—and resting in the old home he loved so well—the immediate future, at any rate, may well have looked bright to Nichol. But the shadow was once more about to descend upon the family at the Observatory. His father's health had for some years been much weakened, and on the 19th of September, after a short last illness, he died at Rothesay, at the age of fifty-five, of congestion of the brain. It was for Scotland a great public loss, which was long felt; for his wife and children it was a sorrow never to be forgotten.

Great personal sorrows should not, as a rule, be brought before the gaze of the general public. Almost everyone knows that the profoundest things in life—its "bitter, forlorn farewells"—are, each of them, his or her own to endure in silence—whether it be a silence from which the sufferer emerges with existence ennobled, or with life turned to ashes; and yet a letter, written by Nichol to his father's widow, may find a place here, sent as it was to one who had always striven to supply the place of a mother to her husband's now entirely orphaned children, and one whose tenderness was, on their part, reciprocated by an ever-reverent affection. It was addressed to Mrs. E. P. Nichol, on her arrival at Huntly Lodge, Edinburgh:

"51 ST. GILES',
"OXFORD, May 3rd, 1860.

"My dear Elizabeth,—This will find you on your arrival at your new home. I will think of you all to-morrow, a strange day in our history; for, when I remember that you are leaving the Observatory, I feel that I am severed from

it, by the loosening of the last link that has till now still bound me to it. It is the symbol of my breaking off from all my past life, and passing into a new world. What has been will remain in memory for ever, but those scenes and associations can only be parts henceforth of an unforgotten past. I cannot think that I am to address this to you at home, and not in our 'old home.' I will never realize it till I come back, and *not* to that hill top.

"Yet it is all very true what we have said to each other so often. The Observatory, without the presence of the one who inspired it, would always have had a deeper gloom resting over it from the very contrast. May those recollections now avail only to solemnize us, without arresting the energies of thought and action, which—with returning health and hope—may find a new employment in new spheres and conditions of life. May God bless you, and my dear sister, in Huntly Lodge! Surely there is something beyond these clouds, a sun to shine upon us all; and I look forward, as well as linger over, what has been, when I offer you my welcome to your new home."

During the year 1860 Nichol resided partly in London—as he still half-intended to join the English Bar, and was "keeping his terms"—and partly in Oxford. Almost immediately after taking his B.A. degree (he consistently refused, as Mr. Dicey has indicated, to proceed to the M.A. degree, until religious tests were abolished), he began to make for himself a considerable reputation, as one of the most successful "coaches" for the philosophical side of the Final Honours Schools, that the University had known for long, a reputation which followed him years after he had severed all direct connection with Oxford. His recreations during this year of sorrow, fought down by toil, were chiefly found in an excursion to Paris and the south of France, in the company of Mr. A. V. Dicey, and in a visit to his life-long friends, Mr. and Mrs. Sydney Dobell, then living at Niton, in the Isle of Wight. But a new hope and inspiration were finding their way into his heart—a hope and inspiration which gave birth to the following poem, written on the ninth anniversary of his mother's death:

To J. S. B.

Again with mournful memories rife,
  And phantom hosts that haunt the soul,
  Dawns the funereal day that stole
From me the fairer half of life.

Nine years have passed: with double gloom
  This morning comes; a deeper shade
  Hangs on the hills since I have paid
A double tribute to the tomb.

"He loves and chastens," let us sing,
  Amid the mazes of His will,
  The seasons with their sorrows still
Their unsuspected blessings bring.

When all my heaven was hung with shrouds
  I longed to sleep a dreamless sleep,
  Then came a Voice from out the deep,
A star gleamed through the rifted clouds.

From the dark veil the mystic Hand
  That came to take was stretched to give,
  And gentler music bade me live
With sunshine in a promised land.

New hope inspired my failing breath;
  On me descended like a dove
  God's greatest gift, the crown of Love
The only counter-charm of Death.

Now the long winter of the skies
  Is crossed by gleams of coming spring;
  Peace after storms, the church bells ring,
The weary ship in harbour lies.

The tide of evil days is spent,
  I have a solace for my woes,
  And deep through all my being flows
An undercurrent of content.

With a new gladness intertwined,
  My grief is softened for a while;
  The radiance of thy Sabbath smile
Makes this a Sabbath in my mind.

March 18, 1860.

Another unpublished poem, which he named *Epilogue*, in a MS. volume of verse, may follow this one:

EPILOGUE.

My task is done—if so I may
  Christen the echo of a thought
  From lake and hill and river caught—
The weaving of an idle lay.

So ceasing, if I deemed an hour
  Had been made sweeter by the sound,
  If your too gentle eyes have found
Among those tangled weeds a flower,

I'd praise my voice, I'd praise the lute
  I played upon and made you smile,
  Though all the critic world the while
Should wish my lips for ever mute.

I only wrote what love revealed:
  If nothing yet has wholly drowned
  The aching of an ancient wound
That closed when first our love was sealed.

Forget it and forgive the wrong,
  Forget the foolish fancies there,
  And in the winter deign to wear
The autumn roses of my song.

My evening star—the old grey walls
  Are steeped in sunset—tower and town;
  Even as I write the sun is down,
And moonlight on the paper falls.

Through shifting light and changing scene
  Our course runs onward to its close;
  But in the twilight of repose
Our love will keep our memories green.

Fair through th' autumnal years of life,
  Mornings of childhood gleam again;
  Sweeter the hill and stream and plain
Where first I wandered with my wife.

My task is o'er—our holiday—
  Across the pleasant summer hours
  I throw a votive wreath of flowers,
One lingering look—and go my way.

His deeper thoughts and emotions during this year are expressed in letters written to her who was soon to become his wife. It would be an offence against the sanctities of life to quote at length from a correspondence so utterly private, but, for the sake of carrying on the narrative, a few extracts may be given from passages which admit of publication:

To J. S. B.

"I had a long talk with Kossuth the other forenoon; he seems to be in tolerably good spirits. I have heard from a friend, who will be very angry that I do not appear at Florence this spring, that Mazzini has just returned to London. I shall certainly call and spend an evening with him and renew our disputes, and be scolded for premature scepticism, and like him better than ever. You do not do him justice. Right or wrong in his views, he is one of the purest, most upright, and most fascinating men I have ever met. His fault is that he is more of a poet than a statesman, a thinker acting out his thought with a fiery energy too regardless of the necessary modifications which politics impose upon abstract principles."

To the Same.

". . . . I have finished the book I spoke of, Hawthorne's *Transformation*, and think it in some respects his greatest work. Reading it has been to me a great delight. I have read so many books lately with which I have been only half satisfied that I was afraid I had lost my faculty of appreciation, and was lapsing into that painful mood of indifference which takes *nil admirari* for its motto. But I am again reassured by the impression I have received from this wonderful romance. There are so many talented novels written nowadays that we are apt to weary of the best of them. I struggle through most of those I read, and arrive at the end with the satisfactory sense of having accomplished a task. I rushed through Hawthorne's in an afternoon; when I had closed it I felt as if I had bid adieu to a wise and eloquent friend who had left me richer for his converse. I do not know what the reviews will say

about *Transformation*; probably they will censure the plot as improbable and fantastic, and set off their censure by some commonplaces about the beauty of the style.

"It may be a false taste of mine, but I confess to a very limited relish for those exceedingly probable stories, like Miss Austen's, whose whole merit consists in the accurate portraiture of characters we may meet, of events which may happen every day, and the graphic transcription of talk we may hear at every tea table. Commonplace and bombast are the Scylla and Charybdis of novelists, and I dislike the one as much as the other. Hawthorne entirely avoids either extreme; his style is perfectly classic, and his manner chaste; and if his thought and incident lead us into a land of wonders, it is none the less intensely real. I cannot understand what sort of experience of life those critics (so plentiful in England) have had, who are constantly decrying what they term improbabilities. I have no reason to suppose that my own has been peculiarly romantic, and yet it has brought me again and again into contact with scenes and events as wonderful as any to be found in romances. It is when we look on the surface of life only that we lose sight of its wonder. There is much on the surface that is interesting and instructive, much that affords room for critical examination and keen satire, such as Thackeray's. But the prerogative of a poet is the power of seeing far beneath to the secret springs of thought and action, the perplexities that are too subtle for outward expression, and the mesmeric influences of one mind on another.

"The special characteristic of Hawthorne is this subtle power: writing in prose, he is yet more a poet than anything else. Whether I regard their marvellous revelations of character, or the imaginativeness of their descriptions and the suggestive wisdom of their reflections, I cannot help thinking there is as much poetry in *The Scarlet Letter*, or *Transformation*, as in the *Idylls of the King*. Most people would think this very absurd. I cannot agree with them any more than I can persuade your father to think Browning a greater poet than his wife, or my Italian friend to admit that Byron was a very small man in comparison

with Shakespeare. In matters of taste we must each after all judge very much for ourselves. If I teach Rhetoric to a class, I shall have to teach them that not very much of it can be taught. All I can say is there are passages in those novels which have thrilled me more, and which I have felt to be truer and deeper, than almost any others in our recent literature."

TO THE SAME.

". . . To-night I have good news, which both you and your father will like to hear. I had six pupils reading with me for the final examination. The class list has just come out; the first class contains six names, and four of them are my pupils; all I expected to succeed, and one more; they are as follows, Berkley, Latham, E. C. Boyle, Butler-Johnstone! Hurrah!

"Edmondes, the only other who expected high honours, has a second. I have not been so much pleased by University news since I got my own class. The whole four men are especially favourites of mine. The first[1] is the cleverest of the four, and really an original metaphysician; the second is a poet in a sense, for he got the Newdegate some years ago; the other two you know something of."

On the 10th of April, 1861, John Nichol was married to Jane Stewart Bell, eldest daughter of Henry Glassford Bell, advocate—afterwards Sheriff of Lanarkshire—by his marriage with his first wife, Sophia Stewart, only child of Captain Stewart of Shierglas, Glengarry. It was, as Nichol always acknowledged, the most fortunate event of his life. The lady who accepted him as her husband was lovely in face, a woman of rare intelligence, and utterly without a thought of self; a strength to her husband, when he sought her counsel for the guidance of life; and a refuge in which he found shelter from the storms of the world. Many a student knows—many more, probably, do not know—how much of the kindness and forbearance they

[1] The Rev. W. Berkley, now Vicar of Navestock, one of "The Old Mortality." See pp. 148-150.

received at the hands of their Professor was due in the first place, to the promptings of her comprehensive and ever-compassionate charity. For the rest, for what concerns Mrs. Nichol herself, all those who loved her—which means all who knew her—will understand the feeling of her children that silence only is adequate to honour the memory of one, with whose passing away something irrecoverable has gone out of their lives. In spite of her bountiful gifts of humour, and rich human sympathy, those who loved her always felt that much of her charm was due to the fact that her personality seemed to shed the fragrance of "a garden enclosed"—a garden whose most perfect flowers could not fully open on this earth.

Three children, a son and two daughters, were born of the marriage.

They made their wedding-tour in Switzerland, and the Pyrenees. In the autumn, Nichol re-commenced "coaching" at Oxford.

The following spring was saddened for both husband and wife by the death, by drowning in the Isis, of their friend Mr. George Rankine Luke, then fellow and tutor of Christ Church. Nichol wrote a brief estimate of his friend's character and intellect in a now defunct quarterly magazine, *The Museum*, to which he occasionally contributed.

Two poems, hitherto unpublished, addressed to Mrs. Nichol, will appropriately conclude this chapter. The first was addressed to her before their marriage, and to the second—which is as fine as anything he ever wrote—it would be difficult to find a parallel.

I.

Move her mind in dreams this night
To remember me;
Spirits, in your tranquil flight,
O'er her bend and whisper light,
'Well, he loveth thee.'

Stars, upon your heavenly best,
Lend an influence meet;
Fairies, on your aery quest,
Mingle with her maiden rest
Visions wild and sweet.

Let her gentler fancies dwell
With the tuneful spheres;
Angels, as ye guard her well,
Speak of one who wakes, and tell
The story of his fears.

From thy azure throne above
Stars and angels set,
God, O let thy elder Love,
Her diviner spirit move
To redeem me yet!

Observatory, Glasgow,
January, 1860.

II.

My love, my love, the golden hours
Have come at last for you and me;
Fresh fragrance floats above the flowers,
A morning glory o'er the sea.

The breeze long lingering comes, and brings
The feeling of a new delight,
It comes with healing on its wings
To chase the shadows of the night.

Our honeymoon they say is o'er,
And yet our walks are sweet as ever;
Whether we watch the purple shore,
Or ramble by the winding river.

The noontide in a sultry clime
Burns fiercely on the silent sands;
The cool of evening is the time
When song-birds sing in southern lands.

Thus, though my passion grows more calm,
That feverish pulse that throbs and dies,
Still from your lips I gather balm,
And inspiration from your eyes.

The world moves onward, but our love
Grows deeper, stronger, day by day,
Draws clearer accents from above,
And leads us by a nobler way.

My honeymoon they say is o'er;
  My happy years are but begun,
With thee to gleam a star before
  My path, till all my work is done.

Good night, my love, good night.
  The song that the sea is singing
Is gentle and soft to-night;
  The lustre the stars are flinging
On the bay is tender and bright;
  The bark like a bird is springing
Along the waves to-night,
  And a tune in my head keeps ringing
That makes my heart more light;
  Good night, my love, good night.

May, 1861.

CHAPTER VI.

EARLY ACADEMIC LIFE IN GLASGOW.

A. *ELECTION TO THE CHAIR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW.*

AFTER a time Nichol became very weary of the routine of Collegiate life at Oxford. So far as the talk in the Common Rooms was confined to the work of pupils, just—as one of his correspondents put it—"as the masters of schools talk about the boys they have flogged during the day," it had no interest for him. The dulness of official respectability was always abhorrent to him, and he longed for what he thought—with the memory of his Glasgow student days—would be the freer life of a University Professor in Scotland. The intellectual atmosphere of Oxford at that particular time was somewhat soporific; and there is abundant evidence in his letters that, rightly or wrongly, what he considered its limitations, its airyfiedness, its indifference to any culture which transcended the treadmill round of "smalls" or "greats," was distasteful to him. He was an eminent "Oxford Man," but he valued the wide experience of life—obtained by contact with the larger centres of civilization—far more highly than the erudition that is acquired in academic tunnels of any sort. No one understood better than John Nichol did the value of life at Oxford, both for the scholarly undergraduate, and for the successful College tutor for a few years after graduation; but he did not care to live on, so engrossed with the details of classical learning, as to become almost necessarily ignorant of the vast realms of culture which surround it, or lie

outside of it. To go back from that Oxford, which he loved so well and admired so much, to the old Observatory in Glasgow was, to him, like passing from the torpor of Mediaevalism to the stir of the sixteenth century.

How strange it is that "times go by turns." He afterwards wished to return from that larger centre of industrial and commercial activity, in which he had laboured long and successfully, to the semi-mediaeval quiet which Oxford still supplies.

In the year 1859 (although the published date is 1860) there was "printed for private circulation" a noteworthy little book, which Nichol modestly but felicitously called *Fragments of Criticism.* It had three sections, the first being devoted to "Ancient Philosophy," the second to "Modern Literature," and the third to "Biographical Sketches." The first, which dealt with various aspects of the Greek Philosophy and its leaders, was to a large extent a *résumé* of his Oxford lectures, in those days when he was so brilliant a tutor and "coach." The second was partly reprinted from the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, *Undergraduates' Papers*, and the *Westminster Review.* It dealt with Carlyle, Sydney Dobell, Matthew Arnold, Mrs. Browning, and Tennyson. The third went back to Greek and Roman antiquity, and ended with an estimate of De Quincey and of Carlyle; the last paper being a remarkable anticipation of his own maturer book on Carlyle, for the "English Men of Letters" series. It was issued with a view to his candidature for a chair of Philosophy or Literature, or both combined; but, although it had a publisher's imprint, it was not offered for sale.

In December, 1859, he became a candidate for the chair of Logic and English Literature in St. Andrews, long held and adorned by Professor Spalding. He wrote to a friend from Oxford, "I believe the position would exactly suit me; and, from the support I have already met with, it seems I have some chance of success."

Mr. G. R. Luke, his great friend at Balliol—who had been a Snell Exhibitioner, an Ireland Scholar, and a first-class man in *Literae Humaniores*—wrote of him thus:

"He has been more open than any man I have ever

known to every kind of intellectual interest; he has taken nothing superficially. He has carried into a wide range of studies unvarying soundness of judgment, and the most admirable thoroughness of investigation. . . . Besides his comprehensive grasp of specially philosophic subjects, the singularly philosophic spirit of fairness, and of patient and unprejudiced discussion, with which he comes to every question, is the admiration of all who know him. . . . He adds to his great knowledge of the subject an unusual capacity for communicating it, unrivalled powers of elucidating what is intricate, and of illustrating what is uninteresting or obscure. Not the least of Mr. Nichol's qualifications for a high educational office is his estimable personal character, his courage and honesty, his open sympathies, his enthusiasm for all that is great and good, and his rare magnanimity of temper. Interested in nothing so much as in the good name of our Scottish Universities, I strongly hope that Mr. Nichol will be elected to a chair which he will fill with incomparable ability."

Mr. A. C. Swinburne wrote:

"Personally, I have to add, that I never received such valuable help in the study of Logic as that which, in a space of time necessarily short, I derived from his instructions. No one, I suppose, could be long in the more intimate society of Mr. Nichol without appreciating his steady grasp and comprehension of all matters connected with Mental Science, aud his very rare power of imparting knowledge simply, clearly, and thoroughly."

The late Master of Balliol, Mr. Henry Nettleship, Mr. Donald Crawford, the Hon. Lionel A. Tollemache, and many others, wrote strongly in his favour.

He did not succeed; and the successful candidate—John Veitch—was afterwards, first his rival (again successful) for the chair of Logic and Rhetoric in the University of Glasgow, and afterwards his colleague in that University for more than twenty years. They were each distinguished men, in very different ways. Both of them were philosophers and poets, as well as literary critics; and while they did not always harmonize on matters academic or literary, political, religious or social, there was a deep under-

current of appreciation on each side, beneath the surface differences with which the public became acquainted.

His old college friend, Robert Flint, now Professor of Theology in the University of Edinburgh, wrote to him from Aberdeen:

"Let a Professorship fall to you just now or not, the talents you have received in the way of parental inheritance, when put out to usury, will do good service to the world; and I am certain that the doing of any real work for your Country is its best reward. The Professorship, and other things—status and success—will come before long."

His correspondent chaffed him for his admiration for Keats, and his "unfairness to De Quincey"; but added that "it would be a great blessing to students of Philosophy in our Universities to have as their teacher one who could interpret the great Systems of the Past to them, in so truthful and stimulating a manner, as you would."

Another correspondent wrote: "I thought all along that Veitch was pretty sure of the chair of Logic in St. Andrews; but there will be one here (*i.e.* Aberdeen) shortly to be filled up, where I should imagine that your chance would be much better. Dr. M'Cosh and Mr. A. Bain are, I believe, already applicants; but I fancy there will be no very strong liking for either. I sincerely believe that you are better qualified than they are; and in regard to 'Rhetoric' very much so indeed. I trust that you will try, and that you will succeed."

It was probably a good thing for Nichol that he did *not* get either a fellowship or a professorship at Oxford. His election to the English Literature chair in the University of Glasgow, in April 1862—a chair which he filled for a quarter of a century—was far more helpful to his future life-work than a career at Oxford would have been.

To be wafted by a favouring breeze into an academic haven is usually the very worst thing for a distinguished undergraduate; while to become a Don in the thirties is often a calamity to a large-brained and intellectually many-sided man.

On his election to the Glasgow chair he was congratulated by many friends. A letter from the late Auditor of

the Court of Session in Edinburgh, Mr. John Hunter of Craigcrook—who lived as a sort of literary Mæcenas, in Lord Jeffrey's old suburban haunt—may be quoted:

"Allow me to offer my cordial congratulations on your appointment to the Glasgow chair. I have had the greatest possible anxiety, I may almost say unhappiness, from the doubts and fears which have from time to time arisen on this subject; and the relief and pleasure to find that all has gone right are doubly delightful to me. It is very gratifying, too, to be able to say that, among all the doubtful words that have been flying about, I have never heard one as to your being of all the applicants for the chair the only man that truly deserved to succeed."

The period in John Nichol's career, in which he did his best work, and with which his distinctive services to Scotland will be permanently associated, is now reached. His election to its new chair of English Literature in 1862 was a significant event in the academic history of the University of Glasgow; and it would be difficult to exaggerate its results, which influenced the whole future of the University for many a year.

His interest in his students, his devotion to them, and his constant work for them, are evidenced in many a letter he received, when they were afterwards fighting their way, either in the sphere of Letters, or Journalism, or Law, or the Church.

The following is from one who is now a Scottish school-inspector: "Elation or humiliation depended on a word from you. I remember how kind you were, and forbore to ridicule my bombastic effusions. My style was then at the effervescent stage. How indulgently you hinted the fact! how delicate the incision with which you tapped my dropsical essays!"

Another writes: "If I have gained in knowledge, if my views have been broadened, if my love for literature has been deepened, I owe all this to you."

More than one now distinguished student wrote to him, signing himself, "your most affectionate servant," and pouring out gratitude in unmeasured terms for the stimulus of

his lectures. One wrote of "a flood of recollections of those good days, *during which I grew.*" Professor MacCallum, now of Sydney, wrote so late as 1892: "Hegel, Caird, You, and Carlyle—you four—are the warp and the woof of my intellectual life. I beat out thin and vend your gold, and am proud to be your interpreter to the lads doomed to my care."

Recalling the delightful *cameraderie* of College days, when the freshman (*Scotticé* bejant) delights to show himself a person of importance, by nimble-witted satire of his teachers (with no malice, or any kind of *arrière pensée* behind his chaff), it is wonderful to find how little the Glasgow students could find for criticism in Nichol. They were open-eyed enough to diagnose weaknesses. What Scottish student, who is worth his salt, is not? But his weaknesses could not be satirized so easily as those of other men. In fact he as professor was himself a master of kindly satire, as his students knew; and there are many delightful stories "afloat" as to his class-room. One only I may recall in passing. Nichol's class met at four o'clock p.m.; and he once got a most abject letter of apology for non-attendance on the previous day from a student, who wished to be excused, "because I was the victim of *insomnia* at that hour!"

Of the Glasgow period of his career, Dr. A. W. Ward, the Vice-Chancellor of Victoria University, writes:

"When I was at Glasgow in 1864, Nichol was suffering from a terrible anxiety, the force of which will be appreciated by all who are aware of the effect exercised upon him by his wife's death in 1894. She was at that earlier date so seriously ill that all regular work had become to him a physical, as well as a moral, impossibility; and, at his request, I undertook to read his lectures, during two or three weeks, to the English Literature class. It was his habit to write out his lectures with the utmost care—a very good habit, I think, when the subject of instruction is one in which the manner should, so far as possible, accommodate itself to the matter; and no opportunity should be lost of bringing home to the minds of students the dignity of the study in which they are engaged. Accordingly, he grudged no labour in revising his courses, and the particular lectures of which they were

composed,—at all events during those earlier years of his tenure of his chair, in which I had knowledge of his processes of work. It must not be forgotten that he was the first to fill the chair in question at Glasgow, and that its fortunes—not merely as to the popularity of the subject, but also as to the position and dignity which it would vindicate to itself among the studies of the University—very largely depended upon his conduct of its work.

"Nichol, it was no secret, had hoped to take his seat among the professors of the University, of which his father had been so conspicuous an ornament, as the occupant of a chair of traditional renown, and as the teacher of a science in which he had proved himself an expert at Oxford, as well as at home. But the gods, with whom this was not his last quarrel, had willed it otherwise; and his revenge was to teach English Literature with an effectiveness unsurpassed at all events in his own day. In his lectures the Professor of Literature and the Professor of Rhetoric may have each claimed his share, but neither asserted it to the detriment of the other. His material, accumulated with remarkable assiduity, was digested and arranged with even more remarkable care and skill; exposition and criticism, in both of which he excelled, balanced or harmoniously pervaded one another; and his common sense was robust enough (though the adjective was one in which I remember his prohibiting me from indulging) to prevent him from giving way to the infirmity of subtle critics, and distinguishing all too nicely between the 'author' and 'the man.' As for execution and style, not only passages or perorations, but many lectures as a whole, shone like the polished corners of the temple. The consequence was that, to judge even from my own experience as a substituted reader, Nichol's University lectures were unmistakeably effective; and when, as was at least once my good fortune, I heard him lecture to his class himself, I was delighted by the sympathy, in both graver and lighter moments, between him and his hearers. Perhaps it is only fair that I should incidentally acknowledge the special promptitude of Scottish students in welcoming the wit and wisdom, or the efforts in either direction, of their teachers.

"I have known few distinguished *alumni* of Oxford over whose ways of thought the influence of that University was to all appearance less potent. What first interested me in him was the reflected influence of Carlyle, then perhaps at the height of his sway over aspiring British minds; and, in a less degree, that of Robert Browning. The genius of Browning, Nichol was, both as a writer and as a lecturer —and his pen was already active, when I first became acquainted with him—one of the first to proclaim, and to popularize; nor were his early lectures on the then but half-discovered poet and thinker, surpassed either in breadth of sympathy or in precision of judgment by any of his maturest critical essays. As to Carlyle, Nichol's literary tastes, and his conceptions of much that lies beyond the domain either of letters or of taste, were long mastered by the great writer, with whose nature his own had, for better and for worse, not a few affinities."

Nichol lived to write a critical estimate of Carlyle, which will be referred to in a subsequent chapter.

During his wife's serious illness the following letter was received by Nichol from the Master of Balliol:

BALLIOL, Feb. 12.

My dear Nichol,— . . . Will you give my kindest regards to your wife, and say that I have no doubt she has inward peace and happiness, and can rest in the will of God, whatever that may be. But for your sake, and that of her children, she must also try to get well; there is a want of faith in losing hope even during the long weariness which illness unavoidably occasions. I look forward to seeing her next Term at Oxford, where she will have such a welcome as no one ever had before; and she has more than two months in which to recover perfectly.—Ever yours affectionately, B. JOWETT.

B. *TESTIMONY OF HIS STUDENTS.*

I have received numerous estimates of Nichol's influence and power as a lecturer; and from these I make one or two selections.

Professor M'Cormick writes:

"Before our present entrance examination had set a standard of preliminary knowledge for students entering graduating classes, for the first two years of his curriculum the student who had not had the advantage of a high school education was sadly handicapped; and it was frequently the case that one who was unrecognized for a while, by dint of steady work and superior powers, toward the end of his course succeeded in overtopping his fellows who were the prize-takers in the earlier classes.

"The English and Moral Philosophy classes, taken usually in their last year, were regarded among the more earnest students as the apex of their University course, to which the rest was a preparation. They learned from the accounts given by the seniors among their acquaintances to look forward in this way to their final session. And I have never met with any whose memory of it in later life does not outdo their expectation.

"I may speak for the moment of the English and Moral Philosophy classes together; for, to a Glasgow student, the names of John Nichol and Edward Caird are inseparably linked. It is not only that their classes were taken in the same year; it is also that their methods and influence were in many respects complementary. . . . Nichol's lectures, on the other hand, resembled a series of lightning flashes, darting and momentary. A sentence, it might be a phrase, opened out a new vista; the reading of a verse added to it an indefinite richness of suggestion; a criticism of character or life, casually dropt, burned into our memories, to be often quoted in after years. But these were seldom followed up by comment or explanation. They were left to make their own impression, which naturally varied with each student in proportion to his culture and width of reading. To get the full benefit of Nichol's class one had to have a fair knowledge of English Literature and History, as well as of Classics; for the Professor was apt to forget, in the wealth of his own learning, the ignorance of his pupils. Analogies or contrasts were brought from anywhere and everywhere in illustration of his subject: and it was naturally the few in the class who

were able at all times to follow him. Yet, though the effect was often bewildering to the poorer-equipped among us, the result even for those was undoubtedly beneficial. Besides what we managed to assimilate, we came away with an impatient sense of our own ignorance: our horizon had been widened; we felt a fresher and richer appreciation of what we had already read, and a restless impulse to read more. This was probably the most usual and the most lasting effect of Nichol's teaching.

"It must not be understood, of course, that positive information was neglected or under-rated; but the course of an author's life, and the succession of his works, were but the skeleton of his lecture. Nichol's aim was to supplement the text-book with what it could not give us. There was little note-taking in his class—I speak just now of the hours in which he lectured, not of those which he devoted to the examination of some special work. The student soon realized that to watch the lecturer was part of his education. His flashing eye and changing expression often gave his words half their meaning. There was no gesticulation, and nothing theatrical in his oratory. This reserve added to its impressiveness. For his effects he relied mainly upon a voice rich, flexible, and sonorous, which he managed without a suspicion of artifice. He was the best reader of prose or poetry I have ever listened to. There are passages in Malory, Raleigh, Shakespeare, Swift, Jeremy Taylor, Sidney Smith, Charles Lamb, Thackeray—to take a few examples that occur to me at the moment—which an old student of Nichol's cannot re-read without recalling his tones and accent. The involuted periods of *Paradise Lost*, and the pointed couplets of *MacFlecknoe*, were equally within his compass; and in such over-running rhymed lines as those of Herrick's *Daffodils*, or of Keats' *Ode to a Grecian Urn*, he had a most felicitous way of stressing the rhyme without pausing on it. Nichol's reading was always a justification of the poet's rhythm, and was worth volumes on English prosody. To his better students it was an inspiration to which they owe much of their enjoyment of literature in later life: even the dullest, if he read the *Loss of the Royal*

George or *Ye Mariners of England*, will hear again the high strung intensity and nervous timbre of Nichol's recitation.

"The secret of Nichol's marvellous power lay in his complex and many-sided personality. It was this we carried away with us from his lectures, whatever might be his subject. Criticism, he often said, was but an indirect method of expressing one's own opinions. And, whether his text were Shakespeare, Milton, or Wordsworth, it was above all the impression of Nichol himself that was left upon us. I have said 'many-sided,' for there was no great author with the spirit of whose work he failed to lead us to enter into sympathy; and he was always careful to make us appreciate his excellences before criticising his defects. It was only after arousing our interest and enthusiasm, that he attempted to guide it by his subtilty and soundness of judgment. His fairness and impartiality were convincing to us; and the only point, so far as I can remember, on which some of his old students might differ from him now, is his estimate of the eighteenth century school of poetry, and of Byron who inherited much of its rhetoric. These his love of precision and perspicuity may have ranked too highly. He had an artist's love of form, and antipathy to what was vague in poetry; and his warnings against 'the sense swooning into nonsense' of the minor followers of Shelley were expressed with vigour.

"Nichol's interest in his subject lay naturally more on the æsthetic than on the philological side. He conscientiously gave his senior class a dozen or more lectures at the beginning of the session on the history of the English Language. But his heart was evidently not in it; and he was as glad as his students to have them over and get to literature. In the latter he aimed rather at giving a survey of a wide field, and dwelling only upon the greater authors, than at specializing with minuteness on a single period. . . . Another characteristic, rarely found in a temperament such as Nichol's, was his love of order. His book-shelves and writing-tables were models of tidiness. Whether in his college work or in the practical affairs of life, he was the most methodical of men. And his natural capacity for the mastery and management of details would

have brought him success in business or in law. . . . He attempted, so far as the limits of the course allowed, to give the student some idea of the development and successive streams of tendency in our Literature as a whole, and at the same time a more exact knowledge of certain periods of which he treated with more detail."

Another student, now a distinguished journalist, writes: "Nichol treated his students as gentlemen, both in his discipline, and his manner of lecturing; there was no vexatious enforcement of law and order, but any real indecorum was sternly suppressed. It must be owned that the professor did not 'suffer fools gladly.' I have sometimes seen him wither up a dullard with a satirical word. But, on the other hand, he was most generous of praise and encouragement, wherever he seemed to discern ability; and a successful student was in some danger of having his head turned by the terms of his certificate. Nor did the encouragement stop here, for when a good essay had been given in, the writer would sometimes be advised to try his luck with the Magazines, and be furnished with a letter of introduction to an editor. The prize-winners were always asked to dine at the professor's house, and I have very pleasant memories of the brilliance of his conversation and his genial courtesy as a host. Occasionally the class afforded us a glimpse of a real live poet. One day in my year a little large-headed gentleman walked in behind the professor, and took his seat beside him in the rostrum. The whisper soon went round that it was Swinburne, who at that time was on a visit to Nichol, and at the end of the lecture there were cries for a speech from the poet; but all we got was a smile and a bow."

Mr. Dunn, the Scottish School-inspector already referred to, sends me the following:

"I never knew a professor on better terms with his class. Lushington we regarded with a holy awe, as a sort of Olympian Jove; but, while we regarded Nichol with profound respect, there was a deeper note of humanity in our relations with him. He was a sort of Apollo, more approachable, a kind of literary ψυχοπομπός. You felt

that he took a *personal* interest in you, if you showed any real capacity. He used to invite his best men to breakfast. These were pleasant meetings. The talk was easy, frank, playful, and our shyness was overcome by his cordial affability. I remember on one occasion the origin of the College term 'gyp' was discussed, and his delight was great when the Greek word γύψ, a vulture, was suggested.

"No man seemed to take a loftier view of human nature than he did. He willingly gave credit for good motives. His keen analysis moved upon a high plane. I could give illustrations from my own experience of his generous consideration and noble interpretation of character, but they would be out of place. I never heard him utter a censorious word, except for meanness. His antipathies, as well as his sympathies, were strong; but his antipathies were the result of perceived, or imagined, conflicts with high ideals of personal or public conduct. I should say that he regarded hypocrisy as the cardinal sin, whether it appeared as a low-class religiosity, or as a political sentimentality.

"He was essentially a bright spirit in his critical estimates, in his personal judgments, and in his literary and political aspirations. He had stripped himself of prejudice to give clearer outline, and more luminous saliency, to principle. His memory is enshrined within my inmost heart as one of the noblest men whom I have ever encountered; and his influence was no less great in educating character and feeling, than in educating the taste and the intellect. . . ."

Another of Nichol's pupils, the Rev. William Thomson, writes:

"Nichol's eyes were remarkable. They changed with his moods. Sometimes they danced with mirth; sometimes, not so often, they glared angrily. When he discovered students cribbing, or doing anything illegitimate —no matter what—he was really angry; and showed it unmistakably in his manner—his eyes, his voice, gestures, etc. When he was pleased with any one's work, he was charming. His censure was keen and incisive, and his good opinion was considered well worth having. He was the most interesting *viva voce* examiner I have ever met.

He set himself to find out what a man knew. He had a singular felicity in drawing out backward men who were rather nervous and shy. . . . Many of his best sayings were uttered in an informal way when questioning the class. His humour was known to all. He once gave a student a second-class certificate, indicating that some of his work was first-class. The student came to see if Nichol would not give him a first-class. Nichol said, 'Would you rather have a poor first than a good second?' The student answered, 'I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, than dwell in the tents of sin.' Nichol at once gave in!

"The last lecture delivered to the junior class in 1887-8 was on Thackeray. The Degree Examinations were near. Nichol quoted the passage about Pendennis being plucked; and when he came to 'those infernal mathematics' the class became tumultuous, and not a few secretly winced. . . . When he quoted, in his last lecture, the following session (March, 1889), 'O, my comrades, I have drunk many a merry bout with you, and have always found Vanity of Vanities written on the bottom of the cup,' his voice was troubled, though it did not break.

"Nichol did not preach much to us, but so far as he did, he laid stress not on the Epicurean, but the Christian view of life. He often quoted, 'violent delights have violent ends,' and said we must not be passion's slaves, but masters of ourselves, if we would realize the dignity of human nature. He warned us against the excesses of Stoicism and Epicurism alike. Though a Hellenist in many ways, he knew that 'above the violets of the Acropolis' it was right to 'rear the blossoms of Paradise, the plants and flowers of light.'"

C. *CANDIDATURE FOR OTHER CHAIRS.*

Nichol's success in the chair of English Literature in Glasgow had, from the first, been great. During two winter sessions his professional work had been most stimulating to the students, and fruitful of the best results to the University. But his early academic love for Philosophy so dominated his nature, that he became a candidate for the

chair of Logic and Rhetoric in the University, when it was vacant in 1864 by the resignation of Professor Buchanan.

Many of his old Oxford students wrote to him, saying that—although his wide acquaintance with English Literature, and his great power of criticism, made him most valuable in the chair which he was the first to occupy in Glasgow—Mental Philosophy was the department in which he was most fitted to excel. Hence they very warmly supported his candidature for the chair of Logic and Rhetoric.

It was in these terms, *e.g.* that Thomas Hill Green, Fellow of Balliol, wrote in reference to his candidature:

"Two questions may naturally be asked as to a candidate for such a post—Will he be an efficient teacher? and is he likely to add anything of permanent value to the literature of his subject? Both these questions may be answered emphatically in Mr. Nichol's favour. Of his powers as a teacher he can get abundant evidence from Oxford, where he was more esteemed as a tutor than any man of his time, and where, of many subjects that he taught well, he was always reckoned to teach Logic the best. That he will in time—if placed in a suitable position—produce a work on Logic, of a kind new in the English language, I have a strong personal conviction. He is thoroughly master of the old systems, without being bound by them; he is also acquainted with those new views of the science, which have been promulgated and discussed during the last forty years on the Continent, but have as yet found no interpreter in England. Combining with this knowledge a keen interest in the subject, and a remarkable power of statement, he is more likely to supply some of the existing defects in the English literature of Logic than any one that I know."

Frederick Denison Maurice, who had taken great interest in him when he went up as a freshman to Oxford, wrote to him thus:

Dear Mr. Nichol,—I enclose you a testimonial which, whatever its worth, is the expression of a very honest opinion. I was not the least prepared for such an Essay as you sent me;[1] but, independently of the evidence it affords of your own fitness for the Logic, or any chair, I

[1] Possibly the Essay on *Greek Ethics*.

most heartily thank you for the instruction it has given me, and for the hints—specially valuable to an old gossip —of the way in which a series of important facts, very difficult to condense, may be brought into the shortest reasonable and most agreeable narrative.—Very truly yours,

F. D. MAURICE.

Professor William Thomson, now Lord Kelvin, wrote to one of the electors in the University Court:

"I am not quite sure that Nichol's printed testimonials represent so strongly as they might the impression which we have formed of his energy and usefulness as a professor.

"He has just the qualities that his father wanted in this respect, and I believe he is not at all behind his father in intellectual ability and genius. I do feel very strongly that we want something elevating and impressive in a Chair of Philosophy; and that, I believe, we should have from Nichol much more and better than from any of the other candidates. He is, I believe, of a thoroughly conscientious mind, a hard-working, duty-loving man, and a thorough gentleman in his feelings.

"I know that some people are afraid of his theological views. I am quite convinced that, if any dissatisfaction were felt at first, it would quickly wear away. The *safest* man in a Chair of Philosophy is the man who will best check the tendency to Materialism, that is the one strong anti-religious influence of the day; and I believe that this tendency will be much more effectively opposed by a man of power and high views like Nichol, than by any man of less ability; and, whatever Nichol's theological views may be, I am perfectly convinced that they will not, in his teaching of Philosophy any more than in his present position (I mean not at all) come into collision, directly or indirectly, with the convictions of his students, or in any way exercise an injurious influence on his teaching."

Albert Dicey, James Bryce, and many others of his contemporaries testified to Nichol's pre-eminent qualifications for this chair; but he was not successful in his application.

Three letters from the late Master of Balliol addressed to Nichol at this time may be quoted:

BALLIOL COLLEGE, January 18.

My dear Nichol,— . . . I hope you will not allow yourself to become the most miserable and contemptible of all characters, a disappointed man. There is no class that the world has less sympathy for than those who are full of sympathy for themselves, if I may use the expression. And disappointment is quite unnatural at your age. You have no reason for it except ill-health, and that I hope is now passing away. With your abilities, if you take the right means, and throw yourself a little more into life, there are many paths open to you.

Your kindness leads you to think that I have done more for you than I have. I know, from long experience, that I can do hardly anything for others. But they can do much for themselves. . . .

Eccentricity is a difficult thing to correct; we never see it ourselves, and persons who are familiar with us hardly observe it. It is often mistaken for character; but eccentricity is a mere blind weakness, character is strength. . . . Some would speak also of humility "not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think" as the reverse of isolation, and "of casting all our care upon Him who careth for us" as the opposite of that anxious temper of mind in which ill-health often makes us indulge. I believe firmly in these things, and feel that I have need of them. If they ever occur to you, I would strongly urge you not to cast them aside as without meaning or profit, for sometimes (notwithstanding all the self-deception there is in the world about Religion) they may be the springs of a new life. . . .—Believe me, your sincere friend, B. JOWETT.

ASKRIGG, BEDALE, YORKSHIRE, July 25, 1864.

My dear Nichol,— . . . In about a fortnight I am going to start on *The Republic* again, and shall then fill up, as far as I can, interweaving your suggestions with my own. The load of the book is a terrible burden to me. I suppose this world was meant for a place of work, and that we were meant to be at work in it.

I hope you are going to have a good rest. You have

great elasticity, but you may snap some day. Besides this, eternal overwork spoils the spring. . . .—Ever yours affectionately, B. JOWETT.

I am very much interested about Green's[1] election at St. Andrews. Will you help him to the utmost of your power?

BALLIOL COLLEGE (Post Mark), October 29, 1864.

My dear Nichol,— . . . Green's failure is a great disappointment. He is doing very well here with a class of pupils.

I think that persons who take up an independent line cannot expect to succeed in early life, and if at all only by great energy and force of character. Do not let us choose the stronger part, and find ourselves unequal to it. The sooner men like yourself and Green get to acquiesce in this, and look forward to some higher good, the better. . . . Ever yours affectionately, B. JOWETT.

Two years after this, in 1866—while still Professor of English Literature at Glasgow—Nichol became a candidate for the chair of Moral Philosophy in the same University, then vacant by the resignation of Professor Fleming. His testimonials were again most remarkable.

In this case also he was unsuccessful. Edward Caird was elected, one of his earliest and best friends, and a friend to the last.

The following letters, bearing on this period, are equally honourable to Caird, and to Jowett, and to all concerned :

FRESHWATER (by return of post), afterwards OXFORD.

My dear Nichol,—I have had a letter from Caird about the Professorship of Moral Philosophy. . . . He appears to think . . . that the chances are against you, or rather that success is hopeless. This grieves me deeply: I feel that on every ground very much.

I have told him that, under the circumstances, I thought that he had better stand. . . .

[1] Mr. T. H. Green, along with many others, was a candidate for the St. Andrews Chair of Logic, when it became vacant by Professor Veitch's election to Glasgow.

He says: "I would rather have no professorship, while the world standeth, than do anything unkind towards Nichol." And this is quite true, as you and I well know —Ever yours affectionately, B. JOWETT.

BALLIOL COLLEGE, May 31, 1866.

My dear Nichol,— . . . I like your feeling of rejoicing about Caird's election. I am sure that he is faithful to you, and will be always a true friend. . . .—Ever yours affectionately, B. JOWETT.

These disappointments passed; and—life passing with them—Nichol now addressed himself with renewed vigour to the work of the English Literature chair. He formed many new friendships, both legal and clerical, in Glasgow and elsewhere, and consolidated old ones with men outside the University circle.

Of this period of his life Dr. Donald Macleod writes:

"I did not see much of Nichol since College days until many years afterwards, when we found ourselves well over middle life, and settled in Glasgow. We then came to know one another better than we did at College. Our views on many subjects had approximated: and a warm friendship ensued. I learned to recognize fully what I had always believed, that the note of aggressiveness in manner, which was misunderstood by so many, was chiefly the result of extreme sensitiveness. Indeed his manner was often his worst enemy. The slightest suspicion of insincerity or bigotry, *Philistinism* or unfairness roused his passion, and he would at once pillory the unfortunate object with invective of his choicest phrasing. But he was at heart tender as a woman and exceedingly appreciative of kindness, honest as steel and never flinching from the utterance of his convictions, however unpopular he knew them to be: the more unpopular perhaps, the more did he delight to express them. His faults were those which spring from temperament. His nerves were all as it were exposed—lying on the surface, and he could not help feeling any friction intensely. Noise was agony to him. The crowing of cocks, the barking of dogs, the screaming of railway

engines, especially the demoniacal din caused by the transatlantic invention named 'the American devil'—an instrument of torture used on the Clyde to rouse workmen in the morning—were favourite subjects for his finely pointed objurgations. Among some crisply written papers which he contributed at my request to *Good Words* there was a most original one on 'Jabber'—being a description of his sufferings at a German 'Bad'—from the ceaseless cataract of gutturals and the loudness of the voices to which he had to submit. To my amusement and his own, several Germans, who knew not his peculiarity, resented the realism of his picture, and sent me their irate remonstrances.

"I cannot but confess my painful conviction that John Nichol never received the recognition in Scotland or elsewhere which he deserved. He may have been himself somewhat to blame for this—as he never cared to court popular favour—and perhaps sometimes needlessly offended sensibilities by the strength of his language when advocating a cause. But we have had few more brilliant minds in recent years, or few finer critics. Had his health been more robust, his own literary achievements would have been greater than even the substantial successes which he won."

D. "*THE NEW SPECULATIVE SOCIETY.*"

In 1867 Nichol and I were busy trying to organize a society of philosophically-minded men, who would meet periodically to discuss the questions of supremest interest to all of us. The idea was suggested by the somewhat parallel work already done by "The Metaphysical Society," founded in London, and which included amongst its members Tennyson, Martineau, Stanley, Huxley, Tyndall, Gladstone, Manning, and a score of others.[1] From the first we wished to have a large infusion of the scientific element,

[1] It is to be hoped that the history of that "Metaphysical Society" in London will yet be written. Many of the important papers read to it were afterwards published in *The Contemporary Review*, when it was under the editorship of Mr. Knowles (who was secretary of the Society), and afterwards in *The Nineteenth Century*. It had a short, but very brilliant, career.

while desirous that the philosophic or speculative should be dominant. After much correspondence, and many preliminary arrangements, we asked some forty gentlemen in various professions—academic, legal, clerical, medical, literary, and civic—to meet in Edinburgh, to consider the possibility of the formation of such a society. There was a great deal of discussion as to the name under which it should be known. The proposal that it should be called "The New Speculative" was opposed at first, but finally agreed to.

The first regular meeting of the society was held in Nichol's house in South Park Terrace, Hillhead, Glasgow, and many persons attended—Professor Thomson (now Lord Kelvin), Professor Edward Caird, Sir Archibald Campbell (now Lord Blythswood), Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, the Rev. H. Crosskey, Dr. Pulsford, Sheriff Clark, George Wilson, and others. It was a very interesting gathering. I can recall the speeches of many of the members. It seemed to Nichol and us all that such a gathering of speculative men was a real gain to the esoteric circle then possible in Scotland. We published no *Transactions*, and our work was not much noised abroad; but our society was somewhat like the Aberdeen one of last century, of which Thomas Reid—afterwards professor in Glasgow University—was the chief representative; or, perhaps, it might be more appropriately compared to the Amsterdam society of a century earlier, of which Spinoza was the central figure. It met originally in Edinburgh and Glasgow, during alternate months of the winter University session; but afterwards—as it was found difficult for busy professional men to travel far to attend meetings—it divided itself into three independent branches, the Glasgow, the Edinburgh, and the St. Andrews, the last of them meeting alternately at St. Andrews and Dundee.

Many important subjects were discussed at our meetings, and papers were read, which were afterwards published in the more important Reviews. At the inaugural meeting of the society, Professor Edward Caird read the first paper. But Nichol had the entire credit of the work which "the New Speculative" did, for without him it would never have

been heard of. Such societies do not last long, and I think they should be dissolved, as soon as the chief part of what they undertake to do has been done; just as our Shakespeare, Chaucer, Wordsworth, and Browning societies should wind themselves up, before they become superannuated. Alas! many a member of the New Speculative has now "joined the majority"; but all who still survive have most pleasant memories of its meetings, discussions, and good fellowship. We owed this almost entirely to John Nichol.

As already stated, the aim of the New Speculative was partly to bring old friends together for the discussion and consideration of the deeper problems of human thought and interest, men who were of necessity separated from each other by professional work in distant places; partly, to form an academic bond of union between the east and the west of Scotland, and to minimize that rivalry—which has no educational warrant—between Edinburgh and Glasgow. The society did not realize so much, in the latter direction, as Nichol desired that it should; but every one who became a member of it, and took part in its discussions, felt that he owed a great deal to it.

Curiously enough, Nichol asked his friend John Stuart Mill to join the society! Mill replied:

"August 17, 1867. With respect to the projected society for the encouragement of free inquiry and discussion, those who live in Scotland are the best judges of the value and seasonableness of the proposal. So far as I can presume to judge, I should think such a society very desirable; but I feel some doubt whether my temporary connection with one of the Scottish Universities[1] would prevent it from being thought a kind of intrusion in me to occupy so prominent a position in it as you propose. Perhaps you will allow me to suspend any positive answer at present, and will, in the meantime, inform me of the reception which the project meets with, and the progress it makes towards realization."

[1] Mill was then Lord Rector of the University of St. Andrews.

E. *UNIVERSITY EXTENSION LECTURES.*

Although it was before the days of "University Extension," either in England or in Scotland, John Nichol prepared the way for it, as much as any man did, by the lectures he delivered in Scotland, and in many of the English provincial towns, on literary and philosophical subjects. I owe my first knowledge of him to his having lectured in Dundee in the capacity of an informal University Extension Lecturer in the year 1866.

As a lecturer to extra-academical audiences he had a singularly magnetic power of rousing sympathy, and—what is a much rarer gift—of leading his audience to the *study* of the subjects on which he had discoursed to them. I saw this on the first occasion on which we met, more than a quarter of a century ago, and tributes have reached me from the most opposite quarters to the same effect. In Cheltenham his success was as great as it had been at Manchester and Alderley, or at Bristol, Gloucester, and Penzance.

The following appraisal of his work as a lecturer is sent by a common friend—Dr. Charles Grindrod, of Malvern—who helped Nichol very specially in his *Tables of History and Literature*:

"His special qualities were better shown in his Lectures, than either in his Writings, or his Conversation. His was that peculiar temperament in which deep feeling seems incapable of showing itself, except on rare occasions. Except when startled by some exceptional incident, or excited by congenial intercourse, he seldom showed the wealth of feeling which lay deep down within him; and he almost resented the display of a similar emotion in others. Nor, as is the case with most literary men of the same temperament, did he often show it in his writings. In his lectures, however, it came out. The well-rounded sentences, instinct with literary art, were eloquent with the finest passion of poetry, and gave life to the descriptions of the mighty dead and their undying works, in a way that stamped these lectures as something quite apart from the common run of uninspired discourses or discussions."

A further characterization of him by his friend Dr. Grindrod may be added here:

"This undercurrent of feeling proved itself also in private friendship. No truer friend, no stauncher comrade in any need, ever lived than John Nichol. It is true that he often accompanied his acts of friendship with the sarcasm of the cynic, but he never failed to fulfil a promise. He was not unlike the son in the parable, who said he would not, but did. It was his habit to promise little, and to do much.

"If there be such a vice as over-honesty, Nichol had that vice, and it stood in the way of his career. Moreover, he could never bring himself to the habit of stooping a little in order to get through a door. Nor could he conform to the maxim of 'being all things to all men.' He was, indeed, one of the least adaptable of men. Of an extremely irritable temperament, he used to attack, with often needless vigour, men and things, institutions and causes, which he thought were open to censure."

Principal Ward writes:

"Nichol lectured in a wide variety of localities, extending as far south as Penzance (for which place I remember he had a particular kindness), in connection with organizations now more or less gathered under the wings of the 'University Extension' movement, of which, in point of fact, he was one of the forerunners. He was remarkably popular as a lecturer, although now and then deemed rather exacting on the powers of those who sat at his feet. But, apart from the fact that, though never lengthy, he was occasionally inclined to be long, I am by no means sure that he was mistaken in the belief on which he acted, that for popular audiences the stimulative method is the best. The fire of his commendation, and the vigour of his attack, were such as to excite in the most stolid listener a desire either to agree with him, or to find reasons for quarrelling with his censures. If a popular lecturer sends his audience to their texts, he has not laboured in vain; and of this at least I am certain that Nichol never spared pains, and always lectured at high pressure.

CHAPTER VII.

LATER LIFE IN GLASGOW.

A. *EPISODES DURING THE OCCUPANCY OF THE CHAIR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.*

IN 1872, when the Oxford Chair of Logic became vacant, Nichol thought of leaving Glasgow, and returning to Oxford. Many of his friends, and one distinguished head of a College, thought that he was by far the best person to fill the chair; but this friend dissuaded him from becoming a candidate, as he was not known to the Oxford Convocation. He urged him at the same time most pathetically to take more care of himself physically, or he would break down altogether. "I am convinced that one requires enormous health for literary pursuits" wrote the Master of Balliol.

In the same year he was asked to accept a lucrative offer to go to a distant colony. All his friends dissuaded him from the idea of expatriation. One important writer, and head of a College, wrote to him, "There are very few men in England upon whom the future of English Letters more directly depends than upon yourself. Whether you meet with full recognition is a matter of transitory importance; whether you permanently associate your name with our highest Literature, original and critical, is the real question."

It was, of course, impossible for a man like Professor Nichol to emigrate, at his time of life, to a country where he would have had to begin his career anew. As a rule, it is as great a mistake for one, who has grown old in literary service in a Mother-Country, to expatriate himself

Yours Affectionately
J. Michel.

from it at the close of his life—or even in the mid-time of his days—as it is for a man who has gone to the Colonies in his youth, or his young manhood, to return to the old Land twenty years afterwards, in order that he may try to do his best work there. A colonist can achieve success, only when he identifies himself with the community into which he enters, and it takes many years for the identification to be thorough.

In 1873 the University of St. Andrews conferred on Nichol the honorary degree of LL.D.

Among the many letters which he received from Mr. Jowett, the following may here find a place:

BALLIOL COLLEGE, January 5th, 1875.

My dear Nichol,—Tell me about yourself. How are you prospering? I hope that you reserve time to yourself for solid writing upon Literature or History. Some of those projects of which we have often talked should be reaching maturity now.

You will retort, what am I doing? Finishing up the new edition of *Plato*, which will be a much better book than the last, and will contain some hundred pages of new stuff. Still I am not satisfied at being a translator only, and hope to do something more. I give up visiting; and begin to devote myself to writing, and the rest which it requires. I sometimes think that I have set but a bad example to my pupils in this matter. . . . I remain, dear Nichol, ever yours sincerely, B. JOWETT.

The following letter from Robert Browning refers to a proposal that he should be nominated for the Lord Rectorship at Glasgow University. Until about twenty years ago, that office was filled up by the students on strictly political grounds, the rival clubs being Liberal and Conservative. About the year 1870, however, a third club—called "the Independent"—was started. Its aim was to elect the Rector from academical, rather than from political, considerations. This club approached Robert Browning in 1876, and Alfred Tennyson in 1880.

19 WARWICK CRESCENT, W.,
LONDON, December 16th, 1876.

Dear Professor Nichol,—I have written to Mr. Wellwood, after an interval of a week: for I really found it hard to reply at once, in the only way I was able, to what I feel very hard to refuse, however certain I am that my unfittingness for the honour obliges me to do so. You may not know that the same offer was made to me some years ago, six I believe. I am sure I feel as much gratitude to the students, if not as their goodness and sympathy deserve, at least as their cordiality will require. And let me thank you exceedingly, dear Professor Nichol, for playing the intermediary as you have so kindly done. How strange! I arrived at Glasgow one dark autumn evening seven years since—passed a few hours of the next day in seeing the town, and its memorable places, and then left—without making acquaintance with a single inhabitant: and from Glasgow comes all this care about me!—Pray believe me ever, dear Professor Nichol, yours truly,

ROBERT BROWNING.

In reference to the invitation to Tennyson in 1880, Mr. Lushington wrote to Nichol:

PARK HOUSE,
MAIDSTONE, June 7, 1880.

My dear Nichol,—You probably know by this time that the Independent's invitation has been declined. I am much grieved at this result, and have done what I could to prevent it. But the declarations which assailed him from all sides that it could not help being a *party candidature* (from which he was always resolved to keep aloof) carried it against what I could say. I am afraid this is partly due to a mistake of the students, in the first instance, not having sufficiently made manifest—as he commissioned them to do—that he stood on purely literary grounds. In their circular there were phrases which were obviously poking at the opposite side, which gave colour to the plea that the contest must take the form of political antagonism. If, without any notice of adverse tendencies, the circular had only in general terms described Mr. T.'s writings as inspired with

noble and patriotic feeling it might have been different; but I can hardly wonder that this unfortunate oversight added force to the arguments of those who opposed his consenting at all to enter the lists. . . .

To tell you a private fancy of my own, if I were a Conservative student I would be inclined to think of the Duke of Marlborough, a man who in a high and trying post has won praise from all sides, and, as far as I know, has not been charged with any errors. But no doubt there are many who know much more about probable outlooks in such cases than I do, so I may dream my dream while others have *οὐκ ὄναρ ἀλλ' ὕπαρ ἐσθλόν*.—Ever yours sincerely,

E. L. L.

In 1878 Nichol was asked to give advice as to the constitution of a College to be founded at Aberystwith. One of his friends, who was deeply interested in the founding of that College, corresponded with him as to its ideal; and wished to know what Nichol thought as to the relative advantages of a Constitution framed after the Scottish or the English model. In his answer Nichol wrote of the special excellence of the Scottish system, as its Universities were open to the poorest of the poor, and were attended by the sons of crofters; but were also open to, and were occasionally attended by, some of the richest in the land: so that peer and peasant might know each other as classmates in the same University.

This same correspondent, who was a lawyer and an M.P., and an old Oxford co-mate, wished much to find Nichol beside him in the House of Commons. It is very doubtful, however, if parliamentary life would have suited him. Very few constituencies would have welcomed him, however highly recommended by party-leaders, and nightly attendance in an Assembly, which Mr. Augustine Birrell lately described (to the House itself) as "the paradise of bores," would have tried a temperament so nervous and high-strung as his was.

The following is a letter to him, from Mr. B. T. Williams, in which the writer tried to induce him to think of migrating to Aberystwith:

HOUSE OF COMMONS, June 6th, 1878.

My dear Nichol,—There is to be a meeting of the Council of the University College of Wales on the 14th inst. We intend talking over the election of a new Principal, and taking a step in that direction. . . . I believe if you come to a conclusion in favour of moving to Aberystwith there would be no difficulty in getting you elected. But we shall want you for some time to undertake a great work, and to bring to a successful result a noble effort. You have —above all men known to me—the energy, and the brains, and the sentiment, for it. We should have no difficulty about tempting you with a larger salary.—I remain, my dear Nichol, most truly yours, B. T. WILLIAMS.

He was not tempted, however, to move from Glasgow to Aberystwith.

During the winter of 1878, Mr. Swinburne paid a visit to Nichol at Glasgow. A letter to John Service at Inch, refers to this visit.

14 MONTGOMERIE CRESCENT,
January 26, 1878.

My dear Service,—Swinburne is spending some time with us, and my wife says she thinks that—in his present mild mood—he may even face the Church, at least as represented by the incumbent of Soul-seat, and that he might peradventure be plucked from the burning!

With this object of more than Russian Christianity, and far more than Gladstonian philanthropy, could you, and would you, make an errand here next week, and drop in to convert the heathen at the above address. We can give you a bed any night after Wednesday; but I should especially urge Thursday—any time before seven—as some ingenuous souls, named students, are to meet "the poet," commonly supposed of mischief, on the evening of that date. I am also asking James Brown, who, possibly with fear and trembling, wishes the encounter.—Yours ever in haste,

J. NICHOL.

Several friends gathered at Montgomerie Crescent on this occasion to meet Mr. Swinburne. One of them, who was

specially struck by his humour, afterwards wrote, "He is one of the finest talkers of sense, and certainly the best talker of nonsense, I have ever met with."

This, from the writer, was his highest possible praise.

The following letter was sent by Nichol to his friend, John Skelton.

14 MONTGOMERIE CRESCENT,
GLASGOW, August 4, 1881.

The accompanying volume of Swinburne's was entrusted to me by him to give to you, though he did not think himself sufficiently introduced to write your name upon it. Its condition, cut and read, requires the apology that my own copy had crossed me on the way to London, and was lying here on my return. S. offered me another to read on the way home, which I accepted on condition that he would name some one on whom I should afterwards bestow it. If you have another copy already, perhaps you will find some one to whom to pass it on.

Some say it is S.'s best work. I am not sure of that. It has splendid lines. He is flourishing in health. . . . —Ever yours truly, J. NICHOL.

TO THE SAME.

14 MONTGOMERIE CRESCENT, KELVINSIDE,
GLASGOW, June 15, 1882.

My dear Sir,—Many thanks for your kind letter just received. Besides Swinburne's address it will show you how excited he is about his *Mary*, and how glad he will be to have any light from you on the subject. We were talking of some of your books—especially *Meg*—which I saw on his shelves, when I was in London in April; and, being a North of England man, he appreciates them even where it requires some Scotch to do so—*e.g.* he understands Burns; whereas I have, as he says, only "almost persuaded him" to like Byron.—Ever yours truly, J. NICHOL.

The mention of Mr. Swinburne in these letters makes the insertion of two sonnets, addressed by him to Nichol

in May, 1881, appropriate here. The "hallowed name of Luke," refers, of course, to their mutual Oxford friend, who was drowned in the Isis in 1862.

TO JOHN NICHOL.

I.

Friend of the dead, and friend of all my days
Even since they cast off boyhood, I salute
The song saluting friends whose songs are mute
With full burnt-offerings of clear spirited praise.
That since our old young years our several ways
Have led through fields diverse of flower and fruit
Yet no cross wind has once relaxed the root
We set long since beneath the sundawn's rays,
The root of trust whence towered the trusty tree,
Friendship—this only and duly might impel
My song to salutation of your own;
More even than praise of one unseen of me
And loved—the starry spirit of Dobell,
To mine by light and music only known.

II.

But more than this what moves me most of all
To leave not all unworded and unsped
The whole heart's greeting of my thanks unsaid
Scarce needs this sign, that from my tongue should fall
His name whom sorrow and reverent love recall,
The sign to friends on earth of that dear head
Alive, which now long since untimely dead
The wan grey waters covered for a pall.
Their trustless reaches dense with tangling stems
Took never life more taintless of rebuke,
More pure and perfect, more serene and kind,
Than when those clear eyes closed beneath the Thames,
And made the now more hallowed name of Luke
Memorial to us of morning left behind.

May 1881. A. C. SWINBURNE.

The crash of the City of Glasgow Bank affected Nichol much. He was a trustee for a shareholder. It did not daunt his spirit, but it distracted his energies in many ways.

Few persons can now realize the social agonies which the collapse of that Bank involved. But Nichol was bright, and, even humorous, throughout all the sad time. Proposals were started by his friends to buy his Library, and present it to him again. To one correspondent he wrote:

"We are going to march to gaol, singing noble songs, and in the recesses of our dungeons, where 'we may not stain with grief' the memory of so great a fall, we shall converse on this world—a mad one—and the next, like the dying Girondists.—Yours, till then! J. N."

To another he wrote:

"*Spero meliora*, but the liquidators cannot, as some hope, touch my income or fees; and I can easily get a loan on the books I must keep for use. Some of my friends —some summer, some winter, *some both* (and these only do I prize)—are agitating themselves needlessly in this matter. 'It was not ordained by Nature,' says Carlyle, 'that you should be happy.' It was not ordained, say I, that I should have a fine Library; but it *was* ordained that I should be perfectly free."

Another correspondent who had written to him in a rather gushing manner under his misfortunes, and spoke of him as "the most Christian man" of all concerned in the sad transaction, received the curt rejoinder: "The Lord forgie ye for leein'!" As it turned out in the sequel, thanks to the honourable conduct of the relatives for whom he was trustee, Nichol suffered little direct loss through the failure of this Bank.

In 1885 the newly-established Merton Chair of English Literature at Oxford led him to think of again migrating to the South. In Glasgow he had to deliver 160 lectures annually to his two classes; at Oxford there would be only 42. On the other hand, by going to Oxford he would lose his pension as a Scotch Professor; so he was not desirous of a change. But the late Master of Balliol, and other Oxford friends, advised him to stand; and he did so. The emoluments of the two chairs were nearly equal, but the Oxford one was free from fluctuations,

and as his life had been harassed in many ways, he resolved to make a last experiment in "candidature."

It called forth the warm and spontaneous homage of many friends. Mr. Lushington, and most of his colleagues, gave evidence of his success as a professor at Glasgow, of his power as a lecturer and teacher, even when dealing with a class of 300 students, and of the inspiring influence of his work. Others bore testimony to his rare combination of literary and academic merit.

He did not obtain the Oxford chair, and he felt the loss of it somewhat keenly. But a return to his old surroundings in the South would probably have been less successful, and less joyous to him than he imagined. It is very hard for a man who has lived for a third of a century in an atmosphere so different, academically and socially—as are Oxford on the one hand, and Glasgow or any other Scottish University on the other—to transplant himself successfully, at the close of his life, from the one to the other. I think all his friends were glad that he did not go to Oxford at that time. The following letter indicates one phase at least of the feeling which existed in Glasgow:

61 ST. VINCENT STREET,
GLASGOW, April 7th, 1885.

My dear Mr. Nichol,—I have just returned from London where I had been for some eight days. When there, my son mentioned that you were likely to leave Glasgow and go to Oxford. On my return I asked if you had been offered Oxford, or whether it was a post for which you must make an application—he said it was. Then, I said, I hope Mr. Nichol will not get the place. I sincerely hope somebody else will! This is one way of showing one's friendship —it is my way—I hope you will, even if it be practically within your grasp, refuse to accept. Glasgow hath need of thee, and I hope in Glasgow you will remain.

I think if you heard what I so often hear about the esteem in which so many hold you, you would hesitate about leaving a place where you are so much wanted; and where, if people only knew you better, they would love you more.

Glasgow needs the best man. Oxford might be satisfied with a second or a third.

The only one thing that makes me hesitate a little is whether your health—and that means enjoyment of life—might not be better in the south, but even this is so uncertain that I don't think it worth the risk. One thing you may be sure of wherever you may go—you have my heartiest wish for your happiness; and my hope that, whatever decision you may come to, the new friends that may gather round you, if in a new place, will be as devoted and as steadfast as those you leave behind.

This letter was half written when you happened to call. Your coming in has spoiled it all!—Ever yours very sincerely, JAS. MACLEHOSE.

Nichol replied to his publisher and friend shortly afterwards thus,

LITTLEWOOD, CARRICK,
LOCHGOIL, May 30th, 1885.

Dear Mr. MacLehose,—You, and the very few friends who feel with you, will be more or less glad to hear that the Oxford chair has been given to a Professor of Philology at Gottingen (v. Heine and "Belinda" for the characteristics of that University). . . . One thing is clear, I cannot work any more as I have been doing for the last twenty-five years.—Ever yours sincerely, J. NICHOL.

But the loneliness of a Scottish University Professor of the type of Professor Nichol—after many years of service have passed, and he has been exposed to "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune"—is a very curious fact. I have no doubt that it led Nichol to resign his Glasgow chair, at the earliest convenient opportunity.

To one of his correspondents he wrote: "As I doubt if you have ever been, intellectually, so much alone as I, it is open to question if you can readily understand my gratitude for your sympathy. I hope this does not sound like Joseph Surface!"

"The worst of misfortune," he added, "is that it invites insult."

"Were I a person of property, I would shake the dust of the whole yelling island off my feet, and die, as Jacques Bonhomme or Hans Sachs, quietly in some corner of the Pyrenees, or the Thuringen Wald."

B. *POLITICAL VIEWS—HIS PERSONALITY—THE REVIEWERS.*

Some reference must be made to Nichol's political views and actions. He started as an advanced Liberal, but he was never a zealot: and when the party, into which he was born, and with which he allied himself heroically at first in his student days, broke away from what he regarded as *the policy of right reason*, his affection not only cooled, but he went (by slow degrees it should be remembered) to the other side. The alliance between the Liberal Unionist and the Conservative parties delighted him. It was an alliance which in his judgment brought not only brain, but also backbone, to the Government which accomplished it. He was specially enthusiastic over the services which Mr. Goschen rendered to the country. He wrote to me, after comparing his speeches and his work with those of Lord Hartington and Mr. A. J. Balfour—both of whom he admired and honoured—"he is the Rock of the Union." It is well known that the most curious anomalies develop themselves, within University circles, on political matters. During the Franco-Prussian War, and the struggle in America between the North and the South, prominent men at Oxford and Cambridge "took sides"—quite unexpectedly —in such a way and with such keenness, as almost led to a temporary suspense of personal friendship. Nichol differed from many an old and dear friend on political matters, and expressed his difference in words which his biographer need not record. He need only mention the fact as an academic object-lesson.

Nichol cordially endorsed what his friend William Sellar wrote to him, so far back as February, 1871: "Liberals must join with the Conservatives and liberalize them, and make them the really national and rational party, instead of the party of the country gentlemen." That exactly expressed Nichol's own views.

In the broader lines of national sympathy he was curiously Scoto-American and Scoto-German. He did not do perfect justice to the French nation, and perhaps less to the Italian. He abhorred the military ambitions of the Continental powers; but perhaps he failed to see that the aim of some at least—while ground down under a terrible taxation—has not been so much an aggressive policy of conquest, as the possession of a "new-found-land" to colonize.

No estimate of John Nichol as a man could be complete without some reference to his conversational powers. Over and over again we used to talk "from eve to dewy dawn," and I always found new treasures of wit and wisdom flashing out at every turn. But it was not its manifold knowledge, and rare suggestiveness, that made Nichol's conversation so delightful; it was its courtesy. There have been many brilliant academical talkers—egoists at heart—whose conversation has always had a curious tendency to come round to themselves: their works, their achievements, or want of achievement, or at least of recognition. Nichol's conversation, like that of his friend Sellar, had none of this. It was eagerly sympathetic of others, and fundamentally appreciative of their work.

Another thing to be noted is the extraordinary impression which some of his casual remarks made upon youthful listeners. One correspondent wrote to him: "By the way, ——'s expression, about Truth being a Gothic superstition, came out in a curious way, in our family the other day. ——, who is very observant, must have heard you telling it; and, when remonstrated with about exaggeration in narrative, added, 'Oh, I thought it had been shown that Truth was a Scandinavian myth'!"

His unpremeditated speeches were occasionally great successes. On one occasion he was asked to move a vote of thanks to a lecturer on an academical theme. It was a time of keen political excitement; and, although called upon at a moment's notice, he made a long speech, splenetic but not rash, the reception of which vividly recalled the old days of his undergraduate College oratory. Writing of it

he said, "I felt like the old hunting hack, that, hearing the bay of hounds, carried the cab and its contents over the hedge!"

His sense of humour was as great as his satire was happy; and sympathy with the humorous side of life was quite as strong in him as in any of his contemporaries.

Dr. Grindrod thinks that "his appreciation of humour, with the exception of satire—in which he excelled—was keener than his expression of it, either in conversation or in writing. Yet he was often very witty, when in company that suited him; and he had something of Johnson's power of crushing an opponent, by making just the right reply to him.

"Satire, besides giving him his strongest flight, was perhaps Nichol's stumbling-stone. It sometimes led him astray, by the temptation of opportunity in his otherwise just estimate of men and their works. Tennyson has somewhere called satire the 'fume of little minds.' It is more truly the fume of disappointed minds; and Nichol was justly disappointed, for he had a right to a higher place in the world of letters than was always accorded him."

A curious incident once occurred at Malvern, where he had lived many years before for hydropathic treatment. He was visiting his physician-friend, who is in the habit of receiving patients who require mental as well as bodily cure. When he arrived, his friend was absent; and Nichol was ushered into a room, where a somewhat talkative patient was reading. The latter at once began to enter into a miscellaneous and too familiar conversation, which all Nichol's friends will at once understand his resenting. He remained silent, and afterwards looked at this gentleman with a series of somewhat indignant glances. By and by the latter rose; and, leaving the room, met the doctor (Nichol's friend) entering, and remarked to him, "Very serious case, sir. You've got a very bad patient waiting for you, sir. He won't speak a word! He only glares!"

He was, unfortunately, under the impression that there was a special "cabal" against him in the London literary reviewing cliques. I know that he was wrong in his estimate of the "Savile gang," as he called it; but, on the

other hand, a quite extraordinary amount of evidence has reached me—in the letters of his most distinguished correspondents and friends—as to the way in which the reception of some of his books was pre-judged. They were "criticized, before they were read," by being handed on for review to those who entertained a personal *animus* against him. I am quite well aware that jealousy is an element to be reckoned with in every phase of our complicated modern life; but I had no idea of the extent to which its permeating poison could extend in Literature, until I perused this correspondence.

Some of Nichol's most distinguished friends have written to him details, which fully justify his antipathy to "the book-reviewers."

These disappointments often gave rise to temporary bitterness of feeling, but they never made him a pessimist. They made him satiric, but not cynical. If he was occasionally morbid, and unhinged by attack, living for a time in an atmosphere of shade, the clouds soon dispersed, and he was again a breather of the sweet air, and a rejoicer in the sunlight.

The habit, into which many literary men fall, of not dating their letters, has been a source of much trouble to me in writing this Memoir. Over and over again it has been a sort of conundrum to find out to what month, or even to what year, a letter belongs; even the *envelopes* containing no information! For want of a better clue, I assign the two following letters from the Master of Balliol to this period.

Professor Jowett wrote:

OXFORD, December 15, [ ].

My dear Nichol,—It grieves me that you should think the world to be in a conspiracy against you. Indeed they are not. But the truth is that you speak out your opinions, (few people have the courage to do so, or the energy), and other people attack you in return. You are greatly respected, and have gained in the respect of others, as years have gone on. I really fear that this restless feeling will interfere with

your success in Literature, which might be very great; notwithstanding the mosquitoes, and other insects, which swarm in the newspapers.

I am not an optimist, but I wish to take the world as it is, and do the best I can. I thankfully acknowledge that my outward circumstances during the last thirteen years have been very happy, and that therefore I ought to do all I can for others; and indeed yours have not been unhappy as the world goes; and I feel convinced that you might do so much, if, getting rid of painful thoughts and antagonisms, you would devote yourself to Literature. If you are not careful, the feeling will grow upon you, and become uncontrollable.—Ever yours, B. JOWETT.

Again:

My dear Nichol,—I cannot help writing to assure you that nothing which happens to you is indifferent to me, and I think that I would do anything to promote your interests.

You and I are in the same difficulty. We can look for no external help, but must fashion our lives for ourselves, and that ought to unite us. If opportunities don't come, we must look at life calmly, and make them. It is no use complaining of having public opinion against us. We have challenged that, although perhaps undesignedly, and now we must fight it out, and make a place for ourselves. You know as well as I do that to have written a good book is worth a great deal more, both in real usefulness and in distinction, than to have gained many Professorships. . . . Don't fall into the mistake that I have made during the last ten years of being too much of a drudge, and getting nothing done. *Mais nous changerons tout cela.* . . . In haste, ever yours affectionately,

B. JOWETT.

C. *HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELIGION.*

In previous chapters incidental reference has been made to Nichol's views on Religion. These inevitably underwent a change, as his life developed; and it is a curious study

to his friends to trace their evolution, through many years of vicissitude. His interest in religious, rather than theological problems, was great; but it was the philosophical side both of Religion and Theology—not the ecclesiastical—that chiefly attracted him.

In the pages of his Journal, and in some of his letters to his sister, his religious opinions are incidentally disclosed: and the changes experienced, and recorded, in his later years were due to a process of normal growth and orderly development.

The following letter to the Rev. T. C. Finlayson goes back to his early years:

OBSERVATORY,
GLASGOW, September 18, 1856.

Dear Finlayson,—I hear that you have got into some difficulty, in consequence of the candid expression in your Hall of convictions regarding one of the most important aspects of our Religion, with which I most cordially sympathize. I do not know whether to congratulate you more on the independence which has led you to give a bold utterance of those feelings, or to lament that you are surrounded by men who can so little comprehend or appreciate them.

I need not say how sufficient is the confidence of Truth to bear one over the cavilling of misunderstanding and bigotry, but I trust that no overt act of your own will assist in placing you in a false position.

I have been told that after certain comments made by the professor on your discourse you voluntarily struck your name off the list of theological students. Now, however presumptuous it may appear for me—who am without the sphere of your Hall, and in consequent ignorance of its details—to express a decided opinion, I cannot avoid thinking that it is in all cases a mistake to assume a responsibility, which had much better rest on the shoulders of the authorities themselves.

I do not know if you have chanced to see M'Naught's book on Inspiration, or his pamphlet on his expulsion from

the Liverpool Debating Society for difference of opinion. This owes its entire force to the fact that he refused to withdraw from the association of men who had no right to expel him. They are left to bear the odious burden of an illegal act. There are many instances in which great public benefit has arisen from a course like this; comparatively few, I believe, from simple resignation. With any other reasons you may have for leaving the Hall, I have of course nothing to do; but so far as I am acquainted with the facts of this case, I do think you would strengthen your cause far more by patient resistance, than by any attitude of defiance. I know you will excuse this liberty as it can only have one object.—And believe me, yours sincerely, JOHN NICHOL.

In 1862 the editor of *The Spectator*—to which he had occasionally contributed—wrote to him thus:

"I have long been intending to write to you heartily for your welcome and most interesting letter. To find any interest taken in Theology is rare now, at least amongst men who have entered life, and *not* entered the clerical profession. To me it is, and always has been, a real study, and one of the profoundest interest; and I am almost amazed at the indifference of men in general to it.

"I do believe in the Incarnation, little as I dare to rest on mere textual evidence. It is to me a great central illumination to History and to Life, but beyond this I see little that is intelligent in orthodoxy. I fear Maurice is going to give up his living (though not to leave the Church) in consequence chiefly of Dr. Lushington's judgments. It will be a severe blow to many clergymen in the English Church, who will after this feel uncomfortable in their position. . . . Little as I understand his worship of the text of Scripture, he seems to me the deepest of the theologians, as Jowett is the deepest of the thinkers—much more than a thinker, of course, but still with less of what one may call the sense of the infinite and eternal than Maurice."

In a letter written to John Service, then minister of Inch, in 1876, Nichol said:

"I like your sermons better than any of the modern school I have read, at least that I can recollect, with the exception of one or two of Channing and Martineau; for, though not so eloquent in the popular sense as Robertson's, they seem to me more definite. I admit this may arise from the fact that Robertson seems to me still to believe some incredible things, whereas I see no evidence that you do, or at least that you feel certain of them. On the other hand, you are not too aggressive. The book is indubitably remarkable, and must advance your position; but I think that a congregation wishing to hear you preach might resent your resting on it alone, and refusing to show face. I can quite understand your feeling, but one must 'stoop to conquer' in this country, or dwell apart, pleasing no forms of men and contemplating few. I doubt if that is healthy; if I had lived all my past life by your lake, I might end it there!"

Service replied:

HAMILTON.

Dear Nichol,—I have now for so long a time been in the habit of counting you among the chief goods with which the gods have provided me in this life, that whether you turn critic upon me, or turn Turk—I mean Jingo—does not matter. I am content, so long as you do not, like riches, take to yourself wings, and flee away to a better world, or a better climate. But that means, of course, that I would rather have your good than your bad opinion in the matter of sermons, even though sermons are not the same as songs. It is like nobody so much as it is like yourself to find good even in sermons.—Ever yours, JOHN SERVICE.

And again:

Dear Nichol,—If there were a homœopathy and an allopathy of criticism, I should much prefer the infinitesimal dose of approbation from one particular practitioner to a prodigious bolus from anybody else. This has been said before, and need hardly be said again. It never occurs to me that my audience in Hyndland is few, when I see in it a person with regard to whom a young lady on Sunday afternoon had some inquiries to make. She was sure she

the whole! and (save a few trivialities) what wisdom! Like all enthusiasts, conspicuously the less charitable abolitionists, Woolman wants the sense of proportion, and does not sufficiently discriminate between matters great and matters small. He is also infected with the objection to amusements entertained by some of his persuasion; but if all were like him I could even dispense with pianos. I am sorry for the poor juggler, p. 209 (who was very likely working hard for his living), but with all other hard worked people Woolman has a sympathy only possible to those of comparatively feeble frame.

It is infinitely refreshing to read him on over-toil, after leaving a sturdy cherub like Jowett, who thinks one should always be *doing*. Woolman is like a Christ in speaking of the poor tailors, labourers at unhealthy trades, post-boys, hard driven animals and men: he has a sense, almost like Hawthorne's, of the need we all have—save "busy-bodies"—the thirst and longing we have for "Rest." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you *Rest*." All toiling and suffering, all goaded and ever-worried things should bless his memory. With incisive foresight he perceives the great danger of his denomination —the love of *wealth* and esteem—and in all he says about the hurry and wrestle and scramble for it, or for yet more evanescent popular or social approbation, (motives that yearly seem to me more contemptible), I cordially concur.

I never read a religious book of so much modesty, and (old and hard as I am) could not finish it without many tears. I shall quote the passage about the dream, on p. 264, as equal in beauty to anything in Bunyan. If any one could make me believe in special providences Woolman would. Alas! my knowledge of history, and more, my own experience of life is too strong the other way; but I agree with almost all he says of the relation of man to man. He seems to have been happy in some respects, and not to have met with many liars, thieves, hypocrites, or quacks; and so does not quite realize the occasional need of flogging scoundrels—as his Master flogged them out of the temple—or of making war upon them, with the sword He came to bring. But his practical views as upon "superfluities," etc., are so true and

well put (N. B.—his language is queer but never out of real good taste) that I hope to act more on some of them—which is a tribute! I have been "drawn" to "relieve my mind," I fear to your fatigue; but Lamb was right, and you have done a good work in this reprint. . . .—Ever yours affectionately, JOHN NICHOL.

The following is from his old colleague and friend, Lushington:

PARK HOUSE, MAIDSTONE, June 29, 1884.

My dear Nichol,—I must to some extent demur to your adverse criticism of Maurice. He does not seem to me muddle-headed. Up to a certain point he always enters with the whole zeal for truth and fairness which belonged to him, into the best aspects of every opposite opinion, drawing out its strongest points in the fullest light; then proceeds to supplement its more imperfect sides by applying his own solution. If asked, How do you know this solution is right? he can but say I have accepted it from one who declared it 1800 years ago, and find its truth confirmed by all history, by all movements of my own soul, by all instincts of the prophetic soul of the wide world through the ages, and this is confirmation enough of its rightness to me. His own purity and nobleness of spirit was such that any scheme of dogma which he conscientiously held, *must* have to him only its best and most ennobling influence, and could not lead to bigotry or narrowness as he saw the best of all opposed views. His own doctrine revealed to him its best, fused with his own goodness of soul. His own orthodoxy was generous to the most unorthodox. You say he *became* quite orthodox; to me he seems always to have been so, though his rare candour towards others made many fancy him not so.

What rather distresses me in his letters is the constantly recurring self-depreciation, which has something morbid in it, but I am certain that it is genuine and not affected. A humorous friend of mine used to say, "M.'s sermons always turn me into a heretic. He begins with setting forth the heresy in such bright colours that they fully convince one it must be right. By that time, the air

of the church, and his own melodious voice compel sleepiness. I fade away into unconscious states. I awake an unconverted heretic, having lost the balancing arguments corrective of the first heretical triumph, which should have set my orthodoxy on its feet again." The only case where he seems to me to have fallen short of his wonted charity was Mansel's. I regretted this at the time, though no doubt there was some provocation. The book I tax with both a nimiety, as S. T. C. phrased it, and a paucity; what he *did* is often not clearly set forth. He worked immensely at Christian socialism, etc. *What* his work was I do not learn—possibly others more acquainted with such matters at the time might read it out better.

Well, here is a satiety or (nimiety) for you, about a man for whom I have a loving admiration, though I was neither a disciple, nor ever *very* intimate, though I often experienced his kindness.—Ever yours sincerely, E. L. L.

When, later in the same year, Lushington was elected Rector of the University of Glasgow, he wrote to Nichol as follows:

PARK HOUSE, MAIDSTONE, Nov. 20, 1884.

My dear Nichol,—The day of doom has past, and folded me in the toils of necessity, *μέγα δουλείας γάγγαμον*, as Aeschylus hath it—there is no help for it now, but that I must learn *εἴκων ἀνάγκῃ τῇδε καινίσαι ζυγόν*. The labour will at least be sweetened by the thought of how surpassingly kind and generous were the wishes urged upon me by so many friends to welcome me among them—and if the fuss and trouble of acting the *ῥήτωρ* is over, if life enough is left in me to enjoy the meeting with colleagues and friends of many years, I shall enjoy it most thoroughly.—Ever yours sincerely, E. L. LUSHINGTON

D. *RESIGNATION OF THE CHAIR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN GLASGOW.*

In 1889 Nichol resigned the University Chair which he had adorned for twenty-seven years. Many things conspired to induce him to take the step. He thought that he had then done all he could well do, in a Scottish University:

and the atmosphere of turmoil which he so often breathed became increasingly distressing to him.

In some of his letters belonging to this period there is a tone of underground sadness at the limitations of his life in Glasgow—"this perpetual teaching of roughs, and wrangling with senates." "I am in a sort of low-fever, just able to rise, and read novels, and dine, and go to bed." Again, he wrote of the "growing rowdyism of the semi-barbarians, which will send me to Gartnavel."

As indicated in a previous chapter, Nichol's relations with his students, in his best days, were enthusiastic; and his work with them, and for them, was as effective as it was in the case of any of his University colleagues. But times change; and, in later years, his hold over his class was not so thorough as it had been. For his own peace of mind it might have been better had he retired from the toilsome labours of his Chair at an earlier date. I am sure that he would never have endorsed the saying of a distinguished University Principal: "The Scottish student is an ingrate"; because *he* had a quite remarkable experience of the affectionate sympathy, and the admiration—amounting to homage—of the pupils of his earlier years. But he also knew of terrible instances of ingratitude, and of attacks made upon him through the press, by those to whom he had in simple justice to assign a lower place than they expected to occupy in the class lists.

The dictum quoted above is quite erroneous. There *are* "ingrates" amongst students, as in every other class of society; and some of those, whom he benefited, did very unworthy things to Nichol. Nevertheless, the heart of the Scottish student is usually as good, as his interest is keen, and his receptivity eager; and there have been few professors in *any* University—Scottish, English, or American—within the present century, to whom students look back with greater admiration, and with a sense of more profound and life-long indebtedness, than to Professor Nichol.

From others of his letters, I gather that one reason of his wish to leave Glasgow was the difficulty of guiding a class of students who were "infected by the hostility of the newspaper mob to their Masters," as he put it.

There is no doubt that his decision was a wise one. He had lost something of the power of his young manhood for work in this particular groove. At the close of the University session of 1888-9, he went over to France, and spent a short time in Paris at the Embassy. Afterwards, Lord Lytton wrote to him:

4th May, 1889.

My dear Professor Nichol,—I am indeed thankful to know that you were not altogether disgusted with your too short visit to us. For, though I heartily enjoyed the few moments of it I was free to spare—finding your converse as suggestive and sympathetic as your writings—yet to myself the visit was not all a satisfying one—for I had but one satisfactory chat with you; and there were a thousand things I had wished to say, and ask. However, this little glimpse you have had of it will have enabled you to perceive, and I hope commiserate, the extent to which my life here is rushed and fussed—how very little of it belongs to myself, or is under my own control, and how incompatible are all its conditions with any sort of rational quiet.—Ever most faithfully yours, LYTTON.

P.S.—I am in some ways sorry for myself that you are giving up your chair at Glasgow, as it will break the closest link between me and the University. But I have a feeling that for you the change will prove beneficial in many ways, as well as pleasant in itself—that, untethered, your mind will work more freely—and that, should you care to seek them again in professorial work, you will find elsewhere more congenial pastures.—*Macte virtutis esto*,

L.

His friend, and master—Jowett—wrote to him on July 20, 1889:

BALLIOL COLLEGE.

My dear Nichol,—It interested me to hear of your resignation, remembering your appointment. I think that you are right, not because you have failed, but because you have succeeded in a very remarkable manner. For a few years longer the success might have been maintained; but it is better that you should have rest, and leisure for

writing, and that you should leave off without a decline in the numbers of your hearers.

I think that you may find writing a great pleasure and relief. You have been storing up, during the last thirty years, what should now be transferred to another form. I hope that you will not begin at once, but take a tour, and have some other refreshment. The best part of life, and that in which you will distinguish yourself most, is before you.—Believe me, ever yours most sincerely,

B. JOWETT.

His old friend and ex-colleague, Mr. Lushington, wrote to him about the loss which the University had sustained; and added "few things which do not directly concern myself can interest me more than the appointment to your chair, and Jebb's."

Nichol wrote many letters in support of the candidate he wished to succeed him. When Professor Bradley was appointed, Professor Sellar wrote to Nichol.

"I think the appointment a very good one, not only for Glasgow, but for Scotland. Our 'nature's raw material' is very fair, but wants refining, and wants purging of its provincial dross, its love of rhetoric, and admiration of bad models; and this refining it gets from contact with such minds as those of Lushington, Butcher, Jebb, etc., and it very soon gets to admire them, and to unlearn its admiration for the native models of the Boanerges type. I remember ————, now an Oxford professor, writing an essay, in which, in comparing ancient with modern writers, he rather gave the palm to Dr. Guthrie over Demosthenes. If Oxford has done nothing else for him, it must have cured him of weighing men in that *trutina*."

Although Nichol had given up his Professorial Chair, he kept his house at Montgomerie Crescent, Glasgow, for some time. In autumn he paid some visits in Scotland; and in winter went to the Riviera, to escape the cold of the north. He returned to Glasgow in the summer of 1890.

On June 13, 1890, Mr. Lushington wrote to him from Park House, Maidstone:

"My dear Nichol,—For some time past I had imagined you like a Θεῶν παῖς μακάρων, διὰ λαμπροτάτου βαίνων ἀβρῶς αἰθέρος, on the range of some blissful Riviera, gazing on bays of the peacock's neck in hue, inspired with elysian dreams; and, after all, you seem to inhabit the smoke and stir of that dim spot which mortals call 'Glasgow.' What Διὸς ὅσσα had noised you in these skyey latitudes I cannot say; but such a rumour came, and I unsuspiciously believed it. But, though my fancy has been forced to transfigure your surroundings, my message may be spoken, apart from circumambient clouds and the azure world, based on earth not air. There is a picture of me here, considered good by most who saw it. . . ."

He offered Nichol a copy of this reproduction, which was gratefully accepted, and the rest of his letter refers to it.

CHAPTER VIII.

LITERARY WORK.

During his life in Glasgow, in addition to the singularly efficient discharge of his duties as University Professor, Nichol took part in many public causes; and, although not a "publicist"—in the sense in which such a University man as the late Principal Tulloch was—he contributed much to many a public cause by his ever ready and effective pen. The articles which he wrote for the daily press, on the questions of the hour, would form a little volume by themselves. They were always deft, and trenchant, and full of literary acumen.

These contributions to the newspapers were amongst the best things Nichol ever wrote, notably his "In Memoriam" notices. The columns of *The Glasgow Herald* were always open to him; and the articles written, not only "off the reel," but under the intensest feelings of sorrowful appreciation—the *perfervidum ingenium* of the Scot inspiring them—were always welcomed and admired. Similar contributions were made by him to the *Manchester Guardian*, one of the most literary of English provincial newspapers. Written in haste, and often under intense excitement, they drew from him at the time "the deepest that was in him." They were specially characteristic, because they were superlatively just.

Nothing could be finer than his estimate of the late Master of Balliol, after his death in 1893, with its vivid insight and penetrating appraisal. I have read a letter to him from a great friend of Jowett, and his own friend—a man greatly distinguished as a philosophical divine, now full of years

and honour—who wrote of Nichol's article as by far the best that was written. It must have recalled its Master most vividly to many a Balliol man. The whispering galleries of memory were never more subtilely audible, at once suggestive and commemorative of the past. As an obituary notice, it was almost perfect of its kind.

After Tennyson's death, he wrote the critical part of a long memoir of the Laureate for *The Manchester Guardian*. That, too, was an admirable piece of work.

It is a somewhat sad reflection that fragments of criticism, as fine as anything which the age can produce are often of necessity mere *ephemerae*. They are written for the day, or for the week; and they are forgotten when that day and week are gone. Nevertheless, they may have contained more wisdom than the books which live for a year, or a generation.

It was not only in these wonderfully beautiful and pathetic obituary notices of his friends, however, that Nichol's power as an appraiser was seen. He used also to write critical estimates of books on philosophy and classical literature, not only to the newspapers, but to the quarterly and monthly magazines. It is impossible for me to break the seal of anonymity, and to speak of these articles in detail; but no one, whom he felt it his duty to condemn, ever found him indulging in commonplace satire or ignorant abuse. He was the most generous of critics. This is how one of those whom he criticized wrote to him afterwards: "Your article is all I expected it to be—candid, generous, able, well-informed; much the most thorough and elaborate criticism which any writing of mine has yet received."

In reference to one of these reviews, Dr. John Brown wrote:

23 RUTLAND STREET,
EDINBURGH, Saturday.

My dear Poet and Aristarch,—You didn't send me *The Herald*, but I got it, and read the review with admiration great; but—*materiam superabat opus*—your review is too good, too rich for the book reviewed. It is powerful but tiresome, and hardly justifies itself; we must squeeze out

the whey next time. You speak of Byron as the greatest poet of this century. Now if you put Wordsworth in last century, then this may stand, though I would put in a plea for Scott; but if you set B. before W., then I must apply to the Court of Session for an interdict against such blasphemy. . . . I send some uncouth lines by an unknown poet.[1]

It is his first, and will probably be his last effort. It is remarkable for the number of monosyllabic words in it, especially in "their thoughts."—Yours, and Pulchra's, ever truly, J. BROWN.

In August, 1874, Nichol received news "to my consternation and distress," as he writes in his journal, "of the death of my dear friend, Sydney Dobell." He went up to Gloucestershire, in order to be present at the funeral in Painswick Cemetery, a ceremony commemorated in the sonnet beginning

> Fling lilies lightly on the laureate bier,
> Where rests the garment of a soul as white, etc.

For Dobell, as for Longfellow, and as in earlier days for G. R. Luke, Nichol always felt not merely intellectual admiration but spiritual reverence. Of Dobell's personality he wrote: "His real fascination lay in the incommunicable beauty of a character in which masculine and feminine elements, strength and tenderness, were almost uniquely blended. . . . His loyalty to friendship—that half-forgotten virtue of an earlier age—has never been surpassed. He was chivalrous to an extreme, and this sometimes led his judgment astray on behalf of fallen causes, with a lofty yet gracious mannerism which recalled the ideal of a Castilian knight. . . . Of practical well-doing towards the poor, of encouragement to the young and all who were struggling for a recognition of their merits, he was never weary; for of the jealousy which is one of the main blots of our literature, he had not a tinge. . . . To live with him a few days was to breathe a serener air. An old chronicler writes of Sir Philip Sidney, 'It pleased God that he should be born on

[1] There were some printed lines on Arran generally, and Loch Ranza in particular.

earth as a sample of ancient virtue.' His friends will be pardoned for venturing to apply these words to Sydney Dobell."

The sentences just quoted are taken from the "In Memoriam" sketch of Dobell's life and writings, which Nichol wrote for the complete edition of his poems, published by Smith, Elder & Co., in 1875. In the following year he contributed an "Introductory Note" to the posthumous prose fragments of his poet-friend, issued by the same publishers; and his personal reminiscences and literary advice were of great assistance in the preparation of the *Life and Letters of Sydney Dobell* (Smith, Elder & Co., 1878).

This work was, in a true sense, a labour of love; but Nichol felt himself abundantly compensated for the time and pains, which—out of a busy life—he had bestowed on it. He was rewarded by the satisfaction of knowing that he had done his best towards helping the public to realize what manner of man his friend was. He was also rewarded by the affectionate gratitude of Mrs. Sydney Dobell, who still lives, and warmly appreciates all that his friend did in memory of her husband.

In reference to the "In Memoriam" sketch, Nichol received the following from the Author of *Rab and his Friends:*

23 RUTLAND STREET,
EDINBURGH, April 8, [ ].

My dear Professor Nichol,—Let me thank you for this beautiful book—and for your rich tribute to your friend—you have "truthed it in love." I never did justice to Dobell, he was too good for me—too high strung—it was like living in the air on Mont Blanc, too rarified for my lungs. But he was a true poet, as few now-a-days are. He was made of it. If poetry is the flower of thought and passion and feeling—having in it, at its base, the seeds of the future,—then was his garden all flowers; for weeds have flowers—and he never weeded his garden—and will, I fear, be therefore "strangled in his waste fertility." Yours is indeed nobly, simply, honestly done; and the little bit about J. B. is

too pleasant perhaps for his good. How the book brings back the dead! I think your words on him as a poet are excellent—like an interlocutor—the truth, the whole truth, and *nothing but the truth.* I have not yet read your American article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*—it is horrible to have it immersed in a quarto. I saw it strongly praised. Thanks again, and with regards to the oval eyes, and yourself, I am, yours ever truly, J. BROWN.

In this chapter Nichol's most important literary works are referred to *seriatim.* But his *Leaves*, privately printed in 1854, his articles on the Scottish Poets in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and his pamphlets, are not discussed so fully as his books. In an appendix, page 308, a list of all his writings, with their full titles, will be found.

A. *HANNIBAL, AN HISTORICAL DRAMA.*

In the year 1873 Nichol's *Hannibal, an Historical Drama*, was published. He dedicated it to the memory of his father.

Amongst modern English efforts dealing with historical drama, *Hannibal* is in many ways remarkable. It is individual, and unborrowed. It has rare vividness. The men and the women of Rome and Carthage are reproduced with an accuracy of delineation, which makes them live and move amongst us now, modernized, and yet not so transformed as to lose their ancient individuality. Hannibal is not brought before us in the pages of the historians, as he is in this modern drama. In the historians, although his figure looms grandly, he is seen through the mist of Roman misrepresentation. Perhaps in Arnold's *History of Rome* we have the best historical presentment of him, in the Rugby headmaster's description of the Second Punic War, and its hero; but it required a student of Livy and Polybius at first hand—who was also a poet with the divining inward eye—to do full justice to this great historical figure of the ancient world, to rearrange and adjust the facts of his career, small and great, in due order and harmonious proportion.

It was impossible, from the nature of the theme

chosen, that *Hannibal* could be a play for the stage. The area was too vast for an acting drama; and the passion portrayed was not individual, but national. In fact, between such mighty opposites as "Delenda est Roma" and "Delenda est Carthago," individuality vanishes. Had Aeschylus written a drama on the wars of the Titans, with their new gods of Olympus, he would perhaps have failed; but, consummate master that he was, isolating Prometheus from his brethren, he succeeded.

The late Master of Balliol wrote thus to Nichol:
"I read the poem with very great pleasure. You were quite right in leaving off where you did. There is still too much hurry or succession in its scenes, which interfere with its repose. But the impression which I received upon the whole was that the poem was a very fine one, and that it was a great distinction to have written it."

The following is part of a letter from Dr. John Brown, of Edinburgh. The author of *Rab and his Friends* was a remarkable letter-writer. Far too few of his epistles have as yet been published, and this one casts quite as interesting a light on the writer as on its recipient:

"*Hannibal* is great; great in conception and in execution, in body and in spirit. The men and women live and breathe. The great time is bodied forth quite marvellously, and there is a sustained elevation and power throughout. It reads as if it had been written at a heat, without any marks of haste, no joinings, no weak bits.

"If I had more hope, more brain, more heart, I could enjoy it still more. Let me thank you for the rousing you have given me.

"There are three things, I think, I would like otherwise; but I say this tentatively, for I think it too often is an impertinence to meddle with the head and handiwork of genius. I desiderate (1st) the relief of humour, of occasional pleasantry, such as crops up in the deepest tragedy of real life, and often intensifies it. (2nd) The absence of the presence of Fulvia. It distresses me beyond the right limits of pity and terror. It is the same feeling of distress that

comes over one in reading *Philip van Artevelde* when he marries (that is, doesn't marry) that second woman. Maybe I am quite wrong in this; but I would rather continue to believe in Hannibal's fidelity to Imilce. (3rd) Why did you not end with his death? Of course it was long after, but it is the true end of all; the forlorn, broken-hearted, impaired outcast at bay, and—ending it all alone.

"Now, are you angry? No. You may at least know—what one not often knows—all my mind, what I dislike as well as what I like; and you may easily gather the proportion of the one to the other! . . . Sellar is great on *Hannibal*. I want him to review it for the *Saturday*. It is exquisitely printed and bound. The patriot tells his whole story—a man with a heart, as well as a brain and hand.—Ever yours, 'fu' o' sairiousness,' J. BROWN."

To this letter Nichol replied, but I have not seen the answer. On receiving it, Brown wrote:

My dear Poet,—It was good in you to take my remarks as you did. You must have sweet blood in your pericardia. If you promise to finish *Hannibal*, I'll more than forgive his being left meanwhile alive. I feel now that you are right about Fulvia. It is more real though less sentimental. Only she is just a little bit too flagrant. —Yours, and Pulchra's, ever, J. B.

From America Longfellow wrote acknowledging the receipt of a copy of *Hannibal:*

CAMBRIDGE, Dec. 12, 1872.

My dear Professor,—I have received your new book, and have read it with deep interest from beginning to end; too rapidly I know, but I could not stop. It is excellent, and full of power and beauty. The verse gleams like armour, and the little arrow-flights of song sing through the pages. Well done! I cordially congratulate you on this work.

Strangely enough, just as I finished the reading, I took up an English catalogue, and my eye fell on this advertisement—"*Hannibal in Italy: an Historical Drama*, by Wm. Forsyth," to be published by Longman, Green & Co.

I have often noticed this duality in literature. What is it? Are thoughts in the atmosphere like a miasma or a

perfume? Years ago, when I published *Outre-Mer*, a title one would think not likely to occur to two persons at once, a French writer in Paris came out also with an *Outre-Mer*, describing his adventures in America! I am rejoiced to see that your friend Jowett has been chosen Master of Balliol. When you write to him, I beg you to present my kind regards and remembrances.

With cordial greetings to Mrs. Nichol, and renewed congratulations to yourself.—I am, yours always,

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

Principal Ward writes:

"I saw a great deal of Nichol's *Hannibal* in the various stages of its growth, and, though I never thought that it would conquer for him the place among our poets to which he aspired with so noble an ambition, I deeply regret that he should, so to speak, have broken up the materials for the completing by means of a Second Part elaborated with the same care as the First, a tragedy of no common power and dignity. Yet perhaps he was right in his decision; for Nichol was incapable of publishing anything into which he had not put his whole strength; and when the time came for writing the Second Part of *Hannibal* he knew that the requisite elasticity of mind was no longer at his command."

Lord Lytton, in the following letter, written sixteen years after the publication of *Hannibal*, describes the poem as panoramic rather than strictly dramatic. He was perhaps right.

KNEBWORTH, 4th Nov., 1838.

My dear Professor Nichol,—I have just finished your *Hannibal*. My impressions of the work are very mixed, and I find it difficult to explain, or even to record them intelligibly, without entering into all sorts of details, for which time fails me just now.

I may say at once that, given this type of poem (to which no writer has yet reconciled me) the merits of the poem, as regards *quality of workmanship*, appear to me very great indeed. The verse is full of dignity and sweetness—never trivial, never bombastic, and equally free from con-

ventionality and affectation. The music and the magic of association which can be produced from a felicitous management of proper names are here in a high degree. All the descriptive passages I think beautiful as such; some of them most beautiful. And the poem abounds in pregnant aphorisms, whilst throughout the whole of it there is a literary aroma which has a charm of its own, difficult to define. But I should have probably read the poem with more enjoyment had I read it years ago before forming sundry theories about "drama," which, right or wrong, have become rigid in my own mind. I can't attempt to set them forth. But nearly all the poems which our English poets, when they write them, call poetic dramas, or historical dramas, appear to me to be no dramas at all, but the productions of a hybrid act not satisfactory in its effects.

Your *Hannibal* has nothing about it that I should call dramatic—the nearest approach in it to the dramatic treatment of a situation is the death of Archimedes—but it is not really dramatic, nor is the death of Fulvia. You would doubtless say the same yourself, and add that it was not your aim to be dramatic in the sense I probably mean, but rather panoramic; in short, that what you wanted to produce was a great picture gallery, illustrating, by a succession of picturesque scenes, the struggle between Rome and Carthage, with Hannibal as the central figure, and that this you have done. But, acknowledging this, I should still object that a very long poem all written in dialogue and divided, as if it were a drama, or meant to be one, into scenes and acts—has no *raison d'etre* in art if it is *not* dramatic. For in that case it must be diffuse, and lacking in the intensity which should belong to poetry whatever the form of it. The effects aimed at might be better attained by a different method; moreover there is something irritating in any work of imagination, which assumes in a meaningless way the external forms, without conforming to the real constructive principles, of a very definite and difficult art. No English poet would think of writing a sonnet with the same sublime unconsciousness of the rules special to the art he works on, that all our

English poets exhibit when they attempt to write a drama. . . . Forgive these jerky attempts to explain in haste why, in a certain sense, I have admired your *Hannibal* more than I have enjoyed it. You see I am a man perverted by a theory.—Yours very faithfully, LYTTON.

In a letter written a few weeks later, on November 29th, Lord Lytton reverted to his friend's poem:

PARIS, 29th Nov., 1888.

There is a line of your *Hannibal* which has been haunting me in the strangest way, and I am sure you will be surprised when I tell you what it is. For it is not one of the many pregnant lines, either of reflection or description, with which the poem abounds. Here it is, however:

The last star melts where Inarime's ridge.[1]

There is something in the sound of these words, and the melancholy fall of the line, which in some mysterious way stirs a long dim train of old associations in me, and always brings back to me the vision of some mountain landscape seen at daybreak, which I must have watched in Italy when I was a boy, with peculiar feelings, of which the vision conjured up by the verse sets moving all the ghosts. How curious these sensations are. The song in *The Tempest* beginning

Come unto these yellow sands

has just the same effect upon me.

Apropos of the *Tempest*, I am going to-morrow evening to see it acted in French by *puppets* at a marionette theatre, some of the actors from the Français speaking the parts! —Very faithfully yours, LYTTON.

B. *TABLES OF HISTORY, LITERATURE AND ART.*

One of the most useful things that Professor Nichol ever did was the construction of a series of chronological tables of European History, Literature, Science, and Art, which were first published in 1877. I may be pardoned for

[1] See *Hannibal*, Act III., sc. vi., l. 1.

mentioning the origin of the idea. In his first visit to me in Dundee in 1866, I showed him a series of thirty tables, each sheet representing a century, and each subdivided into a hundred squares; so that every year had a square to itself. I gave ten to the centuries B.C., and twenty to those which were A.D. These large sheets I had filled up as best I could, with my limited historical knowledge, (1) with the date of the first publication of all the great philosophical books in the history of the world, (2) with the year of issue of the chief contributions to art and literature, and (3) with the most important memoranda as to the Universities of Europe. They were fastened together in a long continuous roll with a cloth hinge between each, and were so arranged that the thirty sheets could be hung on a wall in three sections, one devoted to antiquity, and the other two to our modern period. I well remember Nichol's delight in seeing them, and scanning them. He could not of course go over so large a programme in detail; but his eye fastened, in an instant, on some errors of date which he pointed out to me. He was fascinated with the idea; and asked me, if I was not going to publish such a philosophical and literary chart, if I would let him do so, with *addenda*. As I had prepared my work chiefly as an aid to my own studies, and with no thought of publication, I gladly concurred. In a very short time he produced these "Tables," which were a special contribution to literary, scientific, artistic, and political history.

A prominent Oxford tutor and literary reviewer wrote to him: "Your tables will be always kept on a little movable bookcase close to my elbow. Had I had it earlier it would have saved much time, and a great deal of jumping up from my chair to go in search of books." He indicated three mistakes to be corrected in the next edition; and urged his old friend to come and visit him in Oxford, and to "talk *not* of Mr. Gladstone and Ireland; but of old times, old friends, old books, and old scenes."

It was, of course, quite impossible to be entirely accurate in these "Tables," especially, *e.g.* in matters relating to Egypt. Many Egyptologists objected to his chronology, but that was inevitable. In the columns referring to Art there were

numerous questions open to debate. But there is no doubt that, in argument and plan, it was itself a work of art. Other efforts in the same direction had been very poor, and some very ponderous.

One who is in the habit of sending post cards to his friends (written more easily and swiftly in rhyme than he writes prose!) addressed him thus:

> Thanks for the marvellous book of all the sages
> Who've lived these later sixteen hundred ages.
> I, who before have only guessed at dates,
> What time Dalbrida lived, when Bells began
> To ring out music from the Lateran,
> But oh! one blot, one blunder I have found
> That makes me feel the whole grand book unsound;
> Amongst the men of literature and mind,
> Thy name, good Nichol, can I nowhere find.

Mr. W. B. Scott wrote to him from Penkill, Ayrshire: "The Book of Tables is one of the most seductive of time-killers. One takes it up for five minutes, and spends hours; dates have such a fascination."

It was a bit of admirable work to try to exhibit the relations of Literature to History, as Nichol attempted it in the successive editions of this work, each edition being an improvement on the preceding ones. The edition of 1888 was almost perfect in form. The toil which he underwent in preparing these *Tables* was great, although many portions of the work were delegated to others; but Nichol's own labour was like that of a lexicographer or bibliographer.

He tried to indicate the literary position of this, that, and the other author in these *Tables*, by using a different type in mentioning their names. It is impossible that posterity will ratify *all* his verdicts; but I think that, in the vast majority of cases, his critical intuition will be found to have been accurate. Over and over again we discussed the position he had assigned to ——, and ——, and ——; and when asked to reconsider it, while always open to friendly suggestion, he usually reverted to his original judgment. In the revision of those tables, he obtained great assistance from his chief publishing firm in Glasgow, and from those members of it who had been his

own pupils. To them, just before the publication of the second edition, he wrote, November 18, 1883, when returning his first proofs: "I breathe more freely that I shall see no more of these spectres till they are published. . . . The day after publication we must dine here to drink the health of all the ghosts." In the preparation of the third edition, published in 1888, he got great help from Dr. Charles Grindrod of Malvern, who revised, recast, and added to his column on Art.

To show the practical use of such a series of tables of European History, Literature, and Art, it is enough to mention that they are so constructed as to bring out the correlations of political and literary history, and to exhibit on a visible extended chart the contemporary elements that have entered into the stream of European civilization, whether social or scientific, ecclesiastical or civil, political, artistic, or literary. Each century in those I constructed in 1864 was divided into separate years, with one hundred squares on each table. This not only necessitated a large number of tables, but very many of them were almost blank, as few notable events could be chronicled during several centuries. Mr. Nichol's plan was a vast improvement. To divide the earlier epochs of European History (*i.e.* from 200 A.D. to the time of the Norman Conquest) by centuries; that which followed, till 1350, by half-centuries; the years from 1350 to 1500, by periods of twenty-five years; those from 1500 to 1790 by decades; and from the latter date to the present time by periods of five years, was exceedingly wise. Many of the connecting links in the earlier periods are now lost for ever. Not only have the "ravages of time" obliterated them, but were they now recoverable their value to posterity would be slight, except as an exhibition of the continuity of an ever evolving world-process.

These Tables are of the greatest use to the student of the progress of civilization. Opening them by chance, the seventh (dealing with the first half of the sixteenth century) shows at a glance that, in its second decade, while the Reformation was advancing in Germany, Charles V. ruling in Spain, Francis I. in France, Cortez was

in Mexico; in the same decade the battle of Flodden was fought, Wolsey was Cardinal and Lord Chancellor, the first original English romance (More's *Utopia*) was published, Machiavelli and Luther were both in the mid-time of their power, Copernicus was busy with his great discoveries, Paracelsus occupied with his occult research, and Raphael achieving success in Art. By a clever use of different colours what belongs to one country is distinguished from the rest; and by differences in type the editor's opinion of the relative importance of men and things is indicated. There cannot be a doubt that to see the progress of humanity, from the commencement of our modern era, thus pictorially unfolded in all its various aspects—whatever errors may have crept into it—is of the very greatest service to a student. Such Tables could only have been compiled by a man whose critical power, as well as learning, was great.

One of the most distinguished scientific men in the country wrote to him, on receipt of them: "I have learned from them *very easily* much that I have often wanted to know. They will be most useful to a great many people, of very varied pursuits." A classical authority in Oxford, not often lavish of praise, wrote: "I shall draw the attention of all my historical friends to it as a book they may safely recommend to their pupils. It is an excellent idea, excellently worked out; and that is saying a great deal, for I know by experience how hard it is to get a mass of facts of this kind into a compact synoptic form." An historian wrote of them as "a most convenient treasury of reference." In a letter written in January, 1877, Nichol said: "They have consumed most of my leisure during the last two years, I hope not wholly in vain." This referred to the first edition. His subsequent labours were much greater, and justify his own remark in the preface to the last edition, 1888, that it was a task "more properly belonging to an Academy" than to an individual. The preface to the last edition is a model of conciseness and good taste.

C. *PRIMER ON ENGLISH COMPOSITION, AND QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES ON ENGLISH COMPOSITION.*

In 1879 Nichol contributed a small book on *English Composition* to the "Literature Primers," edited by J. R. Green. Comparing this booklet with the more elaborate treatises on the same subject in our modern English literature, from Blair's and Campbell's downwards, it has undoubted merits of its own. After a definition of the general laws of style, etc., he deals with the characteristics of "accuracy and purity," "clearness and precision," "strength and grace," and then of "versification." It is admirable in every way. One enthusiastic literary friend wrote: "The Primer will be the death of the series. That's what will happen. Nobody will have the cheek to follow you, *boiled down* into one hundred small pages. The quintessence of epigrams will be a new thing in those days. . . ."

To one who wishes to attain a good English style, or rather to avoid the pitfalls of provincialism and inaccuracy, it is useful from first to last; "a piece of tight workmanship," said Dr. John Brown. As there are few things that Scots students need more to be taught than a good style, the book was specially opportune. Some have only taught style, as the drunk Helot taught sobriety; but no student of this little book, if he masters its first principles with care, can miss his way through the labyrinths of a vitiated style.

In connection with style, it is perhaps worth mentioning that one of Nichol's correspondents writes that, at a great academic function, seated between two bishops, the question of style was started; and a volume referred to, which had been issued by a book-maker, containing the opinions of half-a-dozen good writers and two hundred bad ones, who had all been asked, "how they had acquired their style?" One of the Bishops—a friend of Nichol's—said: "I was not aware that I had a style. If I have, I must owe it to the fact that I have written two sermons a week for seventeen years!" The Bishop in question was a humorist of whom delightful stories remain to be told.

Although out of its exact chronological order, it may be best to refer here to the corresponding Primer, entitled *Questions and Exercises on English Composition*, which Professor Nichol prepared, after the resignation of his chair, along with William S. M'Cormick, now Professor at St. Andrews and Dundee, and which was published in 1890.

This second Primer was arranged very much under the same heads as the earlier one, and was "designed to exemplify and elucidate its rules." One interest of this little book is that it gives a partial mirror of the work done in the classes of English Literature in the University of Glasgow for twenty-seven years, as the questions are largely drawn from papers set on the subject to these classes. It will be found as useful a guide to the literary student as the earlier Primer. The following is an extract from its preface: "The whole history of our race has been an almost unique blending of various elements, and to ignore any of these elements would be to belie that history. The early Christianization of our island which brought in the first stock of Latin words, the Conquest which introduced the second, the Crusades of the Middle Ages, and the Commerce of later times, have been like arms linking us to wider worlds of thought and action; and to amputate any one of them would be treason to the speech of Chaucer, of Shakespeare, and of Bacon."

D. *BYRON.*

In the year 1880 Nichol contributed a monograph on *Byron* to the "English Men of Letters" series, edited by Mr. John Morley.

It is impossible to give a detailed critical estimate of this book, but this may be said of it that fairness and generousness—in the appraisal of the man, and his work—are its dominant notes. So much had been previously written about Byron that it was a very hard matter to know what should, and what should not, be said; especially as to *Don Juan*. The book had to be written so as to meet the requirements of the Series; and this, perhaps, accounts for the somewhat inadequate treatment of *Childe Harold*. I know that, after being finished according to his own

ideal, it was sent back to the author, and was cut down, so as to fit into the limits originally prescribed. Its original extent, however, was only an illustration of the fertility of mind that always demanded more space than could be granted to it, alike in literary and academic matters.

Every reader of Nichol's *Byron* must feel that the man lives before him in these vivid pages; the man with his weaknesses and defects, and the manifold surroundings of his life, which were alien to the development of the highest qualities. The radical insincerity of the poet of an insincere age had never been unfolded before in the same way. We have the dark shadows, the lurid lights, and the lonelinesses of his life; while, at the same time, his great underlying humanity is drawn for posterity, in a bold Rembrandt style of literary portraiture. We see the terrible egoism of the poet that was lessening with age, along with the stormful grandeur, and the mighty torrent-rush of his genius. This is a book which is neither a eulogy, nor an apology, nor a condemnation. It is an honest, sterling, and sympathetically-just criticism; and the contrast of such a book, and such an estimate, with the

Obscenaeque canes, importunaeque volucres,

who either snarl or scream at their contemporaries, and their immediate predecessors, is very striking.

Mr. Swinburne wrote:

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Byronite. I congratulate you most cordially and sincerely in having provided the very best and most effective, as well as sufficient, *Apologia* for another man that ever was made, as far as I know or can judge. I am especially gratified by the moderation of tone with which you speak of Southey and Leigh Hunt. I agree with every word you have said as to their anti-Byronic demonstrations; but I was, as you know, apprehensive that you would be carried so much—*me judice*—too far, as to provoke a reaction in the reader's mind against your estimate.

"Of course, I take the book not as a judge's summing up, but as the advocacy of the best counsel who has ever

yet spoken for the defence. Otherwise, I should be not 'almost,' but quite 'persuaded,' as above."

The late Master of Balliol wrote to him:

OXFORD, Oct. 28 [1880].

My dear Nichol,—The night before last I staid up late reading your Life of Byron, and I thought I would write to tell you how much I liked it. It is an excellent piece of biography, and probably as near as we can get to the truth. The style is very good, except here and there where it seems to remind me of the "tempestuous" character of the writer (please not to be offended); also some antitheses I noticed which seemed to be of sound rather than sense. But these are very small matters. I think it a capital piece of work, and find that it is generally appreciated. Swinburne, whom I saw last week, was loud in his praises of it, and seemed to agree in the moral estimate of Lord Byron's character.

The great difficulty in writing a poet's life is, that, more than other men, he is not to be trusted about himself. He can imagine anything, and then "makes such a sinner of his memory to credit his own." I forget whether I ever told you of an excellent old woman whom I knew, lady's maid to Lady Byron, at the time of the separation. Her name was Sally Walker. She was left in charge of the house, and used to show it after the break-up. She said that American ladies and gentlemen and others used to complain, "How wrong it was of my lady not to live with my lord, when he wrote such beautiful verses to her." But I used to say to them, "Lord Byron could write verses about anything without feeling them a bit." Sally Walker was a saint of the right sort, for whose memory I have a great respect. She either knew nothing, or would not tell, about the scandals. She said that Lord Byron's lameness could be observed when he walked, but did not amount to deformity. What a touching thing is the manner in which it affected his mind. . . . Ever yours,

B. JOWETT.

The following letter from William Bell Scott to Nichol,

in reference to his *Byron*, has a special bibliographical interest from its reference to Byron's prose *Fragment*:

92 CHEYNE WALK,
CHELSEA, 21st October, 1882.

My dear Nichol,—It is so long since we met, and that was so hurried a meeting, you may well have a vague idea of my identity even when you look at my signature. I have heard of you, and seen what you have done too, however; and, living in a quiet country house in Ayrshire lately, I read your Life of Byron, among other things, and conceived the idea of writing you on a small but interesting matter alluded to there. The book is so admirable a *résumé*, that a small flaw is easily discernible, and this little matter I have had my attention drawn to by possessing both the "Vampire" publication of Polidori, and the first edition of *Mazeppa*, both published in 1819, shortly after the period in Switzerland, when the Shelleys and Byron and Polidori proposed to write a tale on a supernatural subject each, which resulted in the *Frankenstein* of Mrs. S.

Well, Polidori, who was a poor foolish creature, tried his hand, and produced the *Vampire*, which the Rossettis know to have been his. You say that it was published as by Byron, along with a narrative of his abode in the island of Mityline. But it was not published as Byron's; no name is attached to the pamphlet, nor ever was. Byron, however, was wrongly informed that such a story had appeared with his name, and wrote a letter protesting his innocence, which letter I have seen. He was just then preparing to publish *Mazeppa;* and at the end of that volume he printed a prose story, of remarkable interest and ability, as far as it goes, for it is only a *Fragment*, and has no other name. This has been supposed to be his contribution to the scheme contrived in Switzerland; and as the imperfect story has never been reprinted, nor as far as I have observed has it ever been noticed by cleric or laic—man, woman, or child—I think a little note regarding it would be worth giving if you have a chance. The *Fragment* is only in the first edition of *Mazeppa*, I think.

I spend the summer and autumn in Ayrshire now-a-days. If I ever find myself in Glasgow, might I look in upon you, after all these eons of ages?—My dear Nichol, I am very sincerely yours, WILLIAM BELL SCOTT.

Since many authors and critical judges have given to Byron a supreme place in the great hierarchy of the nineteenth century poets of England, and since Goethe, amongst the greater German authors and critics, has placed him so high—even introducing him into Faust allegorically—it is well that the English world has had an eminently just and sober estimate of his genius by one whose special literary characteristic was that of fair-mindedness. Byron was first preposterously idolized, then unduly depreciated and abused; and after the pendulum of literary criticism had oscillated (as usual) from side to side, he was slowly understood, his faults condemned, and his merits duly appreciated. In the estimate of him which Nichol has given to posterity, fairness of judgment, candour, and discriminative impartiality are the most conspicuous features.

A well-known critic writes of the *Byron:*

"It is an excellent portrayal of the best side of the poet's character, while not sparing the more cloudy side, with which perhaps Nichol sympathized. The chivalry of Byron's final act—his gift of life for the awakening spirit of buried Greece—reads, and stirs one, as tragedy does."

E. *THE DEATH OF THEMISTOCLES, AND OTHER POEMS.*

In 1881 Nichol issued another volume of verse, ***The Death of Themistocles and other Poems.*** I think this was his chief contribution to the Poetical Literature of his country. As a historical drama, and a reproduction of the spirit of the time, *Themistocles* is better than ***Hannibal*** was; and its conclusion, from the lines

> No will of ours averts the appointed close,
> I grope my path, as bound for some dim bourne
> Where all the oracle's conjecture fails,
> Uncertain but unfearing,

has the pathetic dignity of a farewell, seldom reached in literature.

> Let my bones rest in their own Attic soil,
> Where the winds loiter about Salamis,

could have been written by few.

No subject could be more fascinating to a philosophic student of Human Nature, and of History—who was also a poet intent on the dramatic treatment of the springs of action—than the character of Themistocles. It is not a drama, in the ordinary sense; and its author justly calls it "a dramatic fragment." It is a semi-biographical and descriptive narrative, an analysis of character and motive, much more than a drama; and Nichol's management of his theme has much in common with the way in which Browning used to deal with some of his—although the mode of treatment is different.

That the great democratic champion of Greece should have attracted him, as he did, is not surprising. Nichol started life as an extreme liberal, and only by degrees became conservative, and the character of Themistocles had always fascinated him. The drama carries one far into the heart of the Greek world; and re-embodies it, with many "modern touches here and there." The working out of the dialogue is singularly accurate and elaborate. If, as a living critic remarked, one would have liked to have seen the excellence of the Attic constitution safe-guarded a little, the generosity of the royal hero is finely and unobtrusively brought out. The character of Themistocles is so difficult to estimate—quite as difficult as that of another European figure-head, whom Nichol subsequently dealt with, viz., Lord Bacon—that it is a real service that he took up the problem of a close appraisal of the great victor of Salamis, and tried to interpret him anew. He has certainly succeeded in these pages in giving us some of the great object-lessons of History as to the problem of Democracy *versus* Aristocracy and Monarchy. He has shown the evils of the hydra-headed tyranny of the demos, the uneducated mob; and he has also shown that the despotic will of a *tyrannus* may be often worse than the unreasoning fervour of the plebs.

There is much in it that Landor might have written, much also that is kindred to the genius of Clough. As a nineteenth-century study of an ancient period, and of a great Greek figure, it is complex (just because it is modern); but, at the same time, it is simple and direct in its inmost spirit. In *finish* it is quite classical. Has its picture of Athens been surpassed by any modern writer? One special feature of the drama is that it is not the work of a professional writer of verses, but the production of an academic teacher of large, vigorous, active, and *combative* life: and so the poetry comes up out of the rock of character and experience.

His old colleague and friend, Professor Lushington, wrote of *Themistocles:*

"The exceeding sadness of the story does much to interfere with the pleasure of reading it as a whole, though not with the grace and vigour of your treatment of it. That, after such achievements, such a life should have come to such a close, seems to me one of the most painful pictures that history can show. It seems, to take a legendary parallel, a Merlin yielding to a Vivian, and the Forest's echo might come from Mephistopheles. You have done the best that can be done to make his memory still appeal to sympathy by a halo of nobleness."

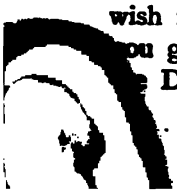
Mr. Lushington adds a critical remark on Nichol's making the word "world" dissyllabic. "No doubt Burns and earlier writers might do so; but the British world is not the Anglo-Saxon *werelt* in all respects. Change sways both words and peoples."

Of this volume Nichol wrote to his publisher:

December 24th, 1880.

My dear Sir,—It is uphill work at Christmas—all the best wishes of which I send you—rubbing up those old and new pieces of plate.

I enclose one I had forgotten in the table of contents, but wish inserted. You must not fail to see that fiddle when you go to Genoa. I have stupidly forgot whether it was in the Doria or Pallavicina palace, and therefore do not say.



I wish the volume to be as *various* as I can make it both in theme, feeling, and metre, for I complain of a terrible monotony of sentimentalism in most recent collections.—Yours very truly, J. NICHOL.

Again, January 10th, 1881.

Dear Mr. MacLehose,—You have probably not been surprised to get nothing sent from London. I was living with two poets, and had to listen to them alternately!

It is in the shorter poems of this volume, however, in the "Pictures by the Way," the lyrics, and the sonnets "In Memoriam," that its chief charm lies. These are a singular revelation of character, of attitude, of purpose, and of tendency. They disclose various relations to that vast keyboard of humanity, which Nichol knew so well; and show the range of his sympathies, as well as of his insight. The "In Memoriam" sonnets, and all the poems "From the Old Home" are pure gold, without alloy. *Madonna Mia* and *Donna Vera* will live in our literature, and will delight posterity, long after the things of this hour are forgotten.

Nichol's power of re-awakening, and of giving definite expression to, those vague thoughts and feelings that used to be experienced long ago, but become lost in the after-toil and tempest of life, was conspicuous. There is a wonderful freshness in this book of his; it is the creation of a mind and heart, that never could grow old. His sonnets on Garrison and Longfellow were hailed far and wide in America. "Others," wrote W. B. Scott, "rouse me like the sound of a trumpet."

His sonnet on his father is one of the finest utterances of filial piety in our literature, and the one on Carlyle beginning:

> Sirius has ceased from out our firmament,

struck the keynote of all his future appraisal of him.

The minor poems in that volume of 1881 are not diamonds in the rough. They are polished brilliants; and almost each of them *totus, teres, atque rotundus.*

I have a special interest in several of them, as I accompanied Nichol in some of his Swiss mountaineering in 1873.

He was most unfortunate in having bad weather for his chief Alpine excursions, but he was an excellent mountaineer. We crossed together through the Bernese Oberland, from Grindelwald to the Grimsel Hospice, by the Stralech pass, under the Finsteraarhorn, and rested for a couple of hours on a narrow ledge of rock, in front of the great giants of that region. I can never forget his enthusiasm over that expedition, or the excellence of his work as a rock climber.

Nichol dedicated *Themistocles* to his uncle, Mr. Tullis of Rothes, his profound regard, nay his extraordinary affection, for whom ought to be duly recorded in these pages. Mr. Tullis was a remarkable man, an old alumnus of St. Andrews, and afterwards a liberal patron of the University. He was a politician and political economist, somewhat of the school of Carlyle; although, *nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri*, he could hardly be said to belong to any school. Nichol often said to me that his uncle had "taught him much."

I went to Rothes to meet him at Mr. Tullis's house, and well remember not only the first visit, but many subsequent ones. At Rothes there was an atmosphere of repose, and of subsequent mental restoration. It was a delightful place to visit, by any one who was wearied with work or worry; the host being so strong, yet so courteous and gentle. Mr. Tullis was specially interested in Political Economy, was an ardent follower of the doctrines of Adam Smith as to international tariffs, and of reciprocity as opposed to the unilateral free-trade of what used to be called the "Manchester school" of Messrs. Bright and Cobden; and for many years, while I lectured on Political Economy, as well as on Moral Philosophy in the University, he gave a prize to the best student in the class.

The following are selected from letters of acknowledgment received by Nichol, in reference to his *Themistocles*. Mr. Swinburne wrote:

THE PINES, March 29th, [1881].

My dear Nichol,—I add a postscript to my letter of yesterday, with a word of cordial thanks for your new book, and congratulation on its appearance. You never wrote better than in some of the "Simonidea," as Landor called his poems on the dead. Their fulness of noble, and thoughtful, and manly beauty may not attract, or affect the notice or the notices, of "the reptile press," but must command the sympathy and admiration of all worthier readers. There is much else to praise and to enjoy in the book, but this is what strikes me first and most in it. I am delighted to see announced a volume of Critical Essays, and proud to see my name among the subjects: a name like enough, it seems, to be submerged for the present, under the hail of Russo-Radical indignation, and spectatorial contempt.—Yours ever, A. C. SWINBURNE.

His friend Longfellow wrote as follows:

CAMBRIDGE, May 22, 1881.

My dear Professor,—Accept my very cordial and sincere thanks for your kind remembrance, and for the beautiful book you have sent me.

I have read it with great interest and delight. The story of *Themistocles* is fine and vigorous, and overflowing with classic lore. Still, the *Pictures by the Way*, and the other lyrics, come nearer to me, and charm me more.

Need I say how deeply I am touched by the friendly lines addressed to me, or rather devoted to me and my surroundings? No; I need not say it; but only assure you that I respond to the kind feeling and good fellowship that suggested them.

Particularly pleasant to me are the Swiss poems; bringing back romantic memories. The Hebrews were right in having no present tense in their grammar. The present is so fugitive; only the past and future seem permanent.

How often I recall your flying visit here, and your hospitable home in Glasgow, and the distinguished guests I met at your table. I hope that you and your family are all well, and that you are not wearing yourself out with overwork.

Carlyle seems to me a man who, for the sake of work, defrauded himself of his happiness. Your sonnet upon him is very striking. I greatly regret some parts of the *Reminiscences.*

Remember me kindly to your family, and believe me.—Always yours sincerely, HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

One of his most intimate and delightful correspondents wrote to him in reference to these Poems:

"I am old enough to like them better than those of ——, and ——; because they don't require your growing a new inner consciousness to enjoy them! and that is a process one cannot do after 35!"

F. *BURNS.*

Professor Nichol was asked to write a critical essay on "The career and genius of Burns," to accompany the large library edition of his works, which was published at Edinburgh by Mr. Paterson, under the editorship of Mr. Scott Douglas. It was not printed in the place originally intended; but was issued by itself in 1882, to all subscribers to the "works," under the title *Robert Burns: a Summary of his Career and Genius.* Within the compass of seventy pages it gives as just a portraiture of the man, and as keen a critical estimate of his genius, as exists. He follows the very natural division of Burns's career into seven periods. (1) The Alloway period; (2) the Mount Oliphant period; (3) the Lochlea or Tarbolton period; (4) the Mossgiel period; (5) the Edinburgh period; (6) the Ellisland period; and (7) the Dumfries period. He deals deftly with previous critical estimates, and explains what we owe to Burns, what he has done for the poetical literature of his country, as had never been done before. The charm of its pure classical English had a fascination for many readers, apart from the subject. In brilliance it was greater than the *Byron;* and its critical judgments did not dim the lustre of its genuine enthusiasm.

The late Master of Balliol wrote to him:

"It exactly expresses my view of him. It is full of excellent criticism. If I were to find fault—as I used to

do thirty years ago—I would say it bristles too much; but I am surprised at the great knowledge, and command of facts, which it contains. Why give a thought to these little people, mosquitoes, or whatever name they are to be called, of the —— and the ——" [critical reviewers].

Another correspondent, Dr. Henry Crosskey, wrote:

"It seems to me the noblest piece of work yet done for Burns; and should he ever come across you in any strange land, he will be bound to welcome you, as one who read the secrets of his heart. Although a parson and an Englishman, I always feel towards Burns, as he felt when he wrote of Miss Baillie:

> The Deil he couldna scaith thee,
> Or aught that wad belang thee;
> He'd look into thy bonnie face,
> And say, 'I canna wrang thee.'

And your essay is to me so valuable, as not only healthy and sound in criticism, but as making the reader conscious in every page of the unutterable charm of his genius. Any one can moralize; but to recognize the mighty spirit, clothed with just that raiment of flesh and blood, is another matter. Are your satires set to the same tune?"

Mr. Swinburne wrote:

"My dear Nichol,—I congratulate you with all my heart on having done more for Burns, as you had already done more for Byron, than all the rest of the students or champions of either poet together. In this instance, as you know, I am personally (*si quid id est*) more in sympathy—more altogether at one with you—than in the former case; as, in spite of the first cantos of *Don Juan*, and even of the ever glorious *Vision of Judgment*, I have always regarded, and shall always regard, Burns as beyond all comparison the greater poet, as well as the nobler fellow of the two.

"To tell you that your monograph is a model would be an impertinence on the part of your 'old junior.' Like the *Byron*, it is far above anything else I ever read on the subject."

Mr. Lushington wrote:

KENBANK, DALRY,
GALLOWAY, Oct. 11, 1882.

My dear Nichol,—I read with much sympathetic interest your *Burns* which you kindly sent me, as also your earlier biography of *Byron*—strange how nearly the two names, in some pronunciations, as the two destinies, approach to each other. I remember, before going to Cambridge, at a great country house, I met Hobhouse, who spoke of Lord Birrn—the mention of him I think referred merely to some trial of skill in pistol-shooting between a Greek captain, Lord B., and Hobhouse himself—a slight but abiding glimpse in memory, as distinct to me now as the record of Shelley's two little children (who were under the charge of a lady at Hanwell) on whom I, being probably about *aet.* eight, set eyes of boyish admiration.—Yours sincerely,

E. L. L.

It is the union of sympathy with impartial criticism that gives this book its value. So many a previous writer on our national poet, realizing the "mighty mass of manhood," have gone on to regret that he was *not* this, or *not* that, that he had not been different in certain tendencies, or directions; forgetting the unity of Human Nature; and that Burns's imagination, his fancy, his patriotism, and multitudinous energy could not have been what they were without his passions. What a spirit it was, cradled among beasts of the old Scottish stall; how incisive, strong, profound; how tender and how true! But indiscriminate praise does no good; and Nichol's was a needed supplement to Carlyle's less restrained eulogy.

Mr. William B. Scott wrote:

92 CHEYNE WALK,
CHELSEA, 11th November, 1882.

My dear Nichol,—Your essay on *Burns* seems to me the completest *résumé*, and compactest inferential disquisition on the nature of the poet that has been done. Some ten years ago I was asked by an Edinburgh publishing firm to illustrate Burns by a series of etchings; and, when

these were going on, I was asked to extend my labours to editing the work. The firm was that of Fullarton & Co., who had already an edition edited by Hogg. In the course of doing this, I confess I came to the conclusion that the moral nature of Burns was of the lowest clay. His satire on the Scottish Kirk almost at the same time that he was standing in penance on its floor; his swearing to Highland Mary (and I came to the conclusion he pledged troth to the poor creature to get over her there and then) at the very time he was bound to Jean Armour, appeared to me so bad that one dare not characterize plainly the man who could be guilty of such actions.

I have not yet finished your essay, but it appears to me its only defect is too high an appreciation of the man.—Very sincerely yours, WILLIAM BELL SCOTT.

G. *AMERICAN LITERATURE.*

The preparation of his volume on *American Literature* occupied Nichol at intervals for many years. He began it in the spring of 1861, when he delivered a course of lectures on "American Poetry," to the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh; but the design of writing it was only matured after a visit which he paid to the United States in 1865. On his return he wrote an article for *The North British Review* on "Lowell," and another on "Emerson," meaning to add a third on "Hawthorne." His being asked to write the article on "American Literature" for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1875 led him to mature his purpose further. A few years later, in 1879, he gave a course of lectures on the same subject at Cheltenham, and afterwards others in Edinburgh. He then modified his original plan of issuing his account of American literature in lecture-form; and, falling back on the *Encyclopaedia* article, expanded it, so as to include a full account of the literature of the States, from the commencement of its history to the present time. The volume was issued by Messrs. Adam & Charles Black in 1882. A second revised edition was published in 1885.

Here again, as in his other works, justice and generosity are the dominant notes. He displayed surprising acquaint-

ance with historical detail in marshalling his facts, and the *vis vivida* shewn in their interpretation is extraordinary. His criticism is thorough and searching; especially that on Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. Of course he could not escape from errors altogether, and these were soon pointed out, and most of them corrected in the second edition. Some of his juvenile enthusiasm—as for writers such as Fenimore Cooper—was doubtless excessive. But it is when dealing with the major men—such as Hawthorne and Emerson—that he is at his best; not when reviewing the *dei minorum gentium*. I rank his estimate of Hawthorne as the best in his book. The chapter on the American humorists is specially excellent, and more particularly his remarks on the "characteristics" of Transatlantic humour. It was not to be expected that the book would be welcomed so much in America, as in this country; although the verdict of the higher criticism there was very just in its appreciation, and that of individual literary men and women still more so. But as a guide to the average literary Briton, who wishes to know what is most worth reading in American literature, it leaves little to be desired. To intermix so much of the history of America with his literary criticism was an excellent idea, which might have been extended in the earlier chapters. That the emigrants of the *Mayflower* are passed over (and also Penn), and that the Puritan element is almost ignored, was perhaps natural on the writer's part; but many of his readers have regretted the omission.

In 1883 Nichol had an offer made to him to have a part of this book translated into German. He objected to its dismemberment, and he also wished to see a sample of the translation, which seems never to have been sent to him.

His friend Principal Ward writes: "He had made this particular field of study his own, and surveyed it without the desire—generally due to partial ignorance—of exaggerating its heights and depths. He was also a deeply interested student of American politics, into which indeed, at the critical period of the struggle between North and South, he entered heart and soul."

Lord Lytton wrote to him:

KNEBWORTH, STEVENAGE,
HERTS., October 6, 1888.

Dear Professor Nichol,—I owe you a long letter, or, at any rate, a letter on a good many topics, about which I should like to chat with you at length, did time allow; but I have been for the last three weeks, and still am, in only a slightly less degree, beset with almost as many hindrances to either reading or writing as poor Hastings, in Rowe's (still poorer?) play of *Jane Shore*, when, on his way to execution, he exclaims "I have business that would become an ass, and not a minute's time to do it in!"

But last night, or rather in the small hours of this morning, I finished your historical sketch of American literature; and I am too full of it to delay writing to you about it. The subject of it is one in which I was interested beforehand, and as it is treated most conveniently in compartments, some of them with titles which attracted me more than others, I fancied that I should do less injustice to it by desultory reading. But the book has interested me so keenly that, having once opened it, intending only to dip into it, I could not lay it down till I had got to the end of it. It is a long time since any novel has interested me half as much, or kept me at a stretch so long on the alert. I have been up with it all night.

It is delightfully written, and the style, at once dignified and entertaining, never bores or fatigues. Your critical verdicts—though perhaps one or two of them are rather more favourable than mine would be—are all marked by a rare impartiality and conscientious determination to be just; and of your general principles of criticism, and the pregnant aphorisms in which they are packed, I can only say that I wish we had more of them—*inter alia*, "Description is the pony on which beginners learn to ride" is delicious. That which has the greatest personal interest to me is the chapter on the orators.

That part of your book, however, which I have read with the completest and liveliest satisfaction, is its reference to the Civil War, and the character and causes of that great

conflict. To this day I am persuaded that in your knowledge of these you represent a very small minority of our countrymen; and that not one Englishman in a hundred, or even in a thousand, understands the A B C of the case. The event itself, as regards contemporary English opinion about it, was an alarming revelation of the incapacity of English politicians to understand even the most elementary conditions of any foreign situation. Gladstone's total ignorance of the facts, and misconceptions of the forces in action, were most characteristic of the man. It is quite refreshing to me to come across such utterances as yours on this subject, for they are indicative of habitual ways of forming opinion on political phenomena, which are certainly not common. The American Civil War, I think, makes a very good test-object for trying political lenses. Every word of what you say about it is absolutely true; and although your allusions to it are necessarily cursory, they are of a kind which could not have been made by any writer not thoroughly well informed of what he writes about.

Your book has interested me by its criticisms, not only of the writers I know, but also of many others—of some of whom I know nothing (*e.g.*, Brockden, Brown, and Thoreau), whilst with the rest I am but very slightly acquainted. Among the last come the American humourists. But I am greatly pleased to find by your review of them that, if I knew them better, my impressions of them would in all probability remain unaltered. Only two of them gave me any pleasure, and that not much—Artemus Ward and Bret Harte. The former has a genial unpretentious oddity which I enjoy; and the latter, genuine pathos, though I think it runs in a thin vein which does not reach very far. Mark Twain is antipathetic to me, and Hans Breitmann odious. These American humourists, however, such as they are, appear to me to represent the most thoroughly national and original department of American literature. There is not an echo of Europe in any one of them. By the way, in your notice of the minor American writers there is one I miss. Do you know anything of the short tales of O'Brien? One feels they could not have been written if Hawthorne, Poe, and Hoffmann had not gone

before; but I have read them with a good deal of pleasure, and think the best of them very curious and striking. *The Last Room*, for instance, and *The Golden Ingot* impressed me greatly.—Yours very truly, LYTTON.

When, in the course of the year 1888, Nichol wrote and issued a pamphlet on University Reform, he sent a copy to Lord Lytton, who replied to him thus:

BRITISH EMBASSY,
PARIS, 18th October, 1888.

My dear Professor Nichol,— . . . I have read with the greatest interest your admirable paper on University Reform. It deals with a subject on which I feel that your Rector ought to be much better instructed than I am, and with which I should certainly have endeavoured to make myself thoroughly conversant if I were now taking any part in parliamentary life; but my avocations abroad (which I did not anticipate when put in nomination for the Rectorship), unavoidably render me a *roi faineant* in the tenure of that office. I am glad, however, to find that my previous impressions—so far as they went—about the Scotch Universities Bill were in accordance with the views so powerfully set forth in your masterly paper. . . . Yours very faithfully, LYTTON.

Again, at a later date:

". . . To all you say about our critical press I can only reply—*a qui le dites vous?* . . . The fact is the English literature and English criticism of our time belongs entirely to the Bourgeoisis—and the Bourgeoisie hates whatever is not Bourgeois. . . ."

H. *BACON.*

WHEN organizing a series of "Philosophical Classics for English Readers" in the year 1879, I at first asked Professor Nichol to write a volume on J. S. Mill. He agreed to undertake it, but said, "I do not think I could write of him without expressing, at least indirectly, my sympathy with his theological views, which it seems to me

have never had justice done to them." He then said that he preferred Bacon, as "much safer." "I have a distinct theory on the subject of his philosophy, and some knowledge of physics to help me, which could give no offence. I would, of course, criticise the man as a whole."

I gave him Bacon, knowing that he had a wide knowledge of the period, and a view of his own as to the character of the man, as well as his philosophy. It was years before the work was ready, as Nichol's time was fully occupied in different ways. This was in some respects unfortunate, as other writers on the subject were in the field; and he was anticipated by Dean Church and Professor Gardiner.

It would be a long story—and quite useless to tell it now—how the book grew in its writer's hands, and how impossible he found it to compress his materials into one volume of the Series. When I agreed to give two volumes to Bacon—considering the peculiar position in which he stood to his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors, and that he was, more than any one else in the list of modern philosophers (not excepting Leibnitz), a man of action and affairs, a distinguished publicist, and a great lawyer, as well as a philosopher and man of letters—I was met by appeals for a similar extension of space by other writers for their special philosopher. That, however, could not be granted; and it is mentioned here only to explain how it came about that—after much discussion and delay—Nichol was allowed two volumes, the first to be devoted especially, though not exclusively, to the man, and the second to his philosophy.

The introductory chapter of the first book, in which he deals with Bacon's age and surroundings, is a masterly bit of work. The relations in which the great Chancellor stood to his contemporaries are nowhere so fairly stated. These relations, as well as Bacon's own character, had been often discussed by partizans, without being looked at judicially; and the baseness of the man, allied to his greatness, had never been brought out in the same way.

The standard of public action in that period was quite other than it became in later times. Practices were resorted to, and methods adopted, which later standards

have greatly modified, if not reversed. Dissimulation was almost universal, adulation scarcely less so. Intrigues and hypocrisy were rampant; and there is no doubt that the worst defects in Bacon's character were defects which appertained to his age and time. It is not fair to judge him by the canons of the nineteenth century: and in the estimate which Nichol passes on the main facts of his career he will very seldom be found, by competent students, to be far from the truth of what he has discussed. A want of nobility and generosity, with an occasional subserviency and flattery, were conjoined in Bacon with the keenest intelligence, and great legal and political sagacity.

Nichol's estimate is almost a justification of Pope's indictment, "the wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind." Even those who agree with a recent critic in characterizing Bacon as "a magnificent humbug," will admit that they can learn much from these pages. The judgment for which the Chancellor appealed to posterity was never meted out with more judicial impartiality, and the book shows more concentrated thought than any previous work of Nichol's. The subject fascinated him. He thought Bacon the most interesting subject in the whole range of possible biography.

Macaulay's brilliant essay had repelled him, mainly because of the indiscriminate way in which praise and censure were distributed. Macaulay sacrificed the truth of the narrative of Bacon's life, and set aside judicial impartiality. The result was a series of meteoric epigrams, and mere picturesqueness of diction. A critic, who is ignorant of metaphysics, is quite unable to appraise the work of a philosopher; and with all the brilliance of Macaulay's essay on Bacon, it must be described as the production of a literary connoisseur who was a charlatan in philosophy.

But it is in his ethical judgments on the conduct of Bacon throughout his career—justice combined with tolerance —that the chief merit of Nichol's book will be found. There perhaps never was a man who more clearly saw, and more sincerely approved the *meliora*, than the great Chancellor did, while obliged by his relations to the Court (or the favourites of the Court) to follow the *deteriora*. It is a somewhat

parallel case to that of Seneca toward Nero and Tegellinus; Seneca was a much smaller man than Bacon, and more pedantic; but Goethe, perhaps, under similar circumstances, might have acted as Bacon did.

It is impossible thoroughly to like Bacon, he had so little heart; and, if we compare him with another of the ancients, he was much inferior to Cicero, in his want of θυμός; but, after all, we have far more compassion for him than dislike or indignation. Perhaps it was a more difficult thing to be a perfectly honest politician under a Henry VIII. and a James I., than under King Caucus; although, under the former, men were dishonest in a more dignified way!

Let us admit, however, all that can be brought forward against the reputation of Lord Verulam. Who but he ever gathered together the wisdom of the past, reopened it, and bequeathed it in so lucid and memorable a way? The manner in which Nichol has given us a true and impartial picture of the man under many lights and shadows, and has at the same time presented the greatness of the debt which the modern world owes to him as the inaugurator of a new method, gives to these two little volumes a unique value to posterity.

No estimate of Bacon would be tolerable without a corresponding estimate of his age, with its manifold and conflicting tendencies, political as well as literary. He was one of those rare spirits, at the dawn of a new era, full of impulses which turned at once forwards and backwards—a period of multitudinous forces, seething together, and stimulating each other—who nevertheless tended steadily onwards, and gave a new expression to his "zeitgeist."

The following letters refer to Nichol's work on *Bacon*:

To W. B. Scott he wrote:

14 MONTGOMERIE CRESCENT, KELVINSIDE,
GLASGOW, May 11, 1888.

My dear Scott,—Cap in hand, my humblest apologies for being again constrained to postpone my prospect—doubly alluring in this fulfilment of the "Promise of May"—of spending a few days with you. . . . I cannot, or will not, allow the "angel of the house" to have on her hands at

once two invalids—one doubtless a model of patience, but the other a melancholy example of the reverse. Besides, I am bi-daily sending off to Blackwood flitches of "Bacon," taking care always to exalt the "lovely" Democracy of Morris, Madox Brown, Minto, Lord Randolph, and yourself. Precious room, as I told "Topsy," there will be for any form of Art, when Bottom, Snug, Snout, and Starveling are our rulers. Shakespeare knew what he was about; you don't. . . . Excuse the fact that a man who has only aching gums must bite, if at all, with his pen. If you have glanced at my pamphlet, which has led me into a bore of correspondence, you will have found it as mild as milk and water, or as myself.—Yours ever sincerely,

J. NICHOL.

From Glenburn House, Rothesay, Bute, he wrote, on June 13, 1888:

I don't know if you have ever been here, but you will recognize the address of one of those Hydropathic Institutions—which I am wont to call Lunatic Asylums—as a signal of distress. This is about the time when I hoped to have come to you at St. Andrews—according to your suggestion on the Goschen day—MS. in hand. I have never had a day's health or really good day's work since. . . . Next Monday I hope to get home again and resume the work against which the gods or devils seem hitherto to have been fighting not in vain. I shall say nothing of its special difficulties till it is done. The delay, now for about the tenth time, exasperates me beyond words; but on this occasion it must matter less to Blackwood, as there is, I understand, no publishing in midsummer, and he cannot fail to have it in time for the issue of "the Fall." If you are at St. Andrews, or within hail of where we chance to be, I shall come to see you, when the thing is being printed; sooner I should feel like Macbeth meeting Banquo's ghost, "Oh, never say I didn't do it!" I do not know whether to wish *Spinoza* to rush in as a shield, or to congratulate myself, if I am not absolutely the last. It is curious that the two laggarts are the two in many respects most opposite.—Yours ever,

J. NICHOL.

Of his *Bacon*, Lord Lytton wrote to him as follows:

HOTEL BARNINA SAMADIN,
ENGADINE, 21st August, 1888.

Dear Professor Nichol,—My letter from Royat will have assured you how flattered I felt on receiving there your work upon Bacon—as a gift. But I have now to thank you for the charm I have found in it as a book. I read it on my way hither, and could not stop reading it till I had reached the end. I have since re-read many parts of it which specially fascinated me; and, but for a passing attack of ill-health which prevented me from writing, you would sooner have received this grateful record of my impressions. I have always thought it must be much more difficult to succeed in the composition of a short biography than in that of a long one: and especially difficult must it be to give force and freshness to a biographical portrait on a reduced scale, when the subject of it has been repeatedly treated before upon a large scale; but whatever the difficulties of such a task, you seem to me to have accomplished it with a singular success. Of the larger biographies of Bacon, Spedding's is the only one I have read; but his elaborate work leaves yours, to my mind, distinctly original; whilst at the same time its originality is on no point attained by a paradoxical or partizan treatment of the subject. Your portrait of Bacon, moreover, though sketched so lightly and rapidly, I find much the more *living* of the two.

With due allowance for epigrammatic exaggeration, I think the description of Bacon as "the meanest and wisest of mankind" will always hold good, in so far at least as the shabbiness of his conduct, though not in itself exceptional, stands in an exceptional relation to the greatness of his mind. Intellectually he differed so much from the ordinary courtiers of his time, that there is the appearance of a *lusus naturae* in the fact that morally he differed from them so little. But this superficial enigma, so fascinating to the rhetoric of Macaulay, disappears in your vividly natural presentation of his character as the type of the superior *parvenu*—the able man whose main aim in life is to get on—and your admirable exposition of the necessary relation

between such a man with such an aim, and such a *milieu* as the Court of James the First. I suspect that it is by the persistent employment of their second-rate qualities only that even first-rate men "get on," and one wonders what Bacon might have been, had he been born noble, with great inherited wealth.

The style of your book is, if I may say so without presumption, delightful. It differs, and to me most pleasingly, from the general type of those small biographies of famous persons, which have become so important a department of Contemporary Literature, in the fact that it is not a critical essay, or series of such essays on a biographical text, but a *bona-fide* consecutive biographical narrative, the movement of which, instead of being interrupted, is always advanced with increasing interest by the illustrative force of the suggestive criticism of character that grows out of and accompanies its unsuspended progress. Macaulay's Bacon is a monster, Spedding's a miracle—yours, a man. The *idem velle et idem nolle de republica* must always be a bond of sympathy between the writers and readers of history, and I cannot help adding that the lively satisfaction with which I have read your book is enhanced by my complete sympathy with the tone of many remarks in which you glance from past to present political questions. Pray believe me, with renewed thanks, gratefully and sincerely yours,

LYTTON.

In a letter which has not been preserved Nichol objected to the use of the word *parvenu* in the above letter, and Lord Lytton replied on the 6th October: "Your objection is perfectly just. The ordinary sense of the word is wholly different from what I meant. Of course, in that sense, Bacon was no more a *parvenu* than Walsingham or Cecil. All I meant to imply was that he might have been a greater man, if he had not had to pass the greater part of his life in making his way to a great position by all available means."

I. *CARLYLE.*

NICHOL'S last work was his *Carlyle*, published in 1892. Perhaps it is his best.

Many of those who had been helped to "new departures" by Carlyle were pained by the volumes which his greatest friend and *confrère* published. Professor Lushington, after perusing the four volumes which Froude gave to the world, wrote that he "would read no more." Certainly, it amazes one to see how the gloomier aspects of Carlyle's married life were there and then made prominent. At the same time, it is curious how absorbing to the average reader the littlenesses of so great a man can be. "I think it difficult," adds the same writer, "to find a more candid and appreciative review of his writings, or a more generous-hearted and sympathizing recognition of his greatness than your book contains. A great deal touching Mrs. Carlyle, notably the near chance of their separation, was quite new to me. The whole version is (what Carlyle recklessly called 'The Starry Heaven,') *a sad sight*. Let us hope that it is now soothed and sweetened into everlasting peace."

It is difficult to estimate the real merit of one who has been for many years a contemporary, until he is seen in the perspective of the future, when lesser verdicts fall aside, and the greater and juster ones remain. But there is little doubt that posterity will recognize that justice—scrupulous justice—is the dominant quality of Nichol's estimate of Carlyle. This feature, I think, eclipses its picturesqueness.

He wrote to me in August, 1891: "I know quite what I have to say about his Books—indeed, have already said most of it; but the difficulty of dealing fairly, yet not dully, with the Life and Character seems to increase. I write more slowly than ever, being older and weaker, and cannot get on at all if I allow myself in the course of any work to be seriously interrupted by another. It is not the time that a παρέργον takes; but it throws me off the track, on which if I do not keep ruthlessly, I shall never get to the end."

A prominent literary critic of the day—who used to hate Carlyle—pronounced it "a most masterly and splendid piece of work, a noble 'Apologia.' If it has not actually reconverted me to faith in the Old Enemy, it has at least made me reconsider sundry of my points of objection to the man and his doctrine, 'not without results,' to speak in his own dialect. I am delighted by your generous justice to Froude;

but 'generous justice' is the keynote of the whole book. With regard to Byron, as you know, I thought—and still think—you rather generous and partial than just; but here these two prime critical qualities are in exquisite equilibrium."

Another veteran in Philosophy and Literature—Dr. James Martineau—wrote to him that he had "lingered over the first third of the book with more than literary admiration, with the interest of awakened memories of life sixty years ago, when, and since when, many of the figures grouped by you on your pages—the Butlers, Jeffrey, Brougham, J. S. Mill, Mrs. Taylor, Emerson, Margaret Fuller, as well as the Carlyles—were familiar to me, all in personal converse, and some in long-continued relations. The annual visits of Mr. and Mrs Carlyle to her Welsh relatives in Liverpool renewed my delightful intercourse with them through a large portion of the twenty-five years of my life there. In London I respected his increasing love of seclusion; but now and then he asked me to join his afternoon stroll upon Cheyne Walk. Though at times his talk was characteristic, and very often cynical, its humour and pathos always seemed to me deeper than its bitterness. I agree essentially with your estimate both of the prophet himself and of Mr. Froude's mode of dealing with his trust as literary executor."

Mr. Froude, however, wrote to Nichol from Woodcot, Kingsbridge, South Devon, on July 31, 1892:

I read it (the *Carlyle*) eagerly on its arrival, and found it a pleasant contrast to the shriekings of women and womanish men, with which my ears have been so long deafened. I can pay you no higher compliment than in saying that it would have pleased Carlyle himself.

I do not make out whether you knew him personally; but, whether you did or did not, you have formed a more correct judgment of him than any other person who has hitherto written upon him.

In time, no doubt, the world will think of him as you do; but never, in my experience, has the clamour of tongues been more absurd than in what has been said and written about him in the last ten years.

I must thank you for what you have said about my own share in the business. A few sensible words come in season after such a tempest of abuse. You yourself seem to think that perhaps Carlyle might, towards the end, have expressed a wish that the memoir of his wife should not be published. I have only to say that from 1891, when he placed it in my hands, to his death, he never said one word to me that implied such a wish, although he knew that I thought that it ought to be published.

My own opinion was and is, that the writing it was the most characteristic and honourable thing that he ever did in his life, and that so it will be hereafter regarded.

But I have not been careful to defend myself, nor ever shall be.—Yours faithfully, J. A. FROUDE.

3 STRATHMORE GARDENS,
BOGNOR, SUSSEX, August, 14th, 1892.

Dear MacLehose,—I have now a number of letters like the three enclosed, which return at your convenience, not anonymous, but unfortunately not public. Froude's is of value to me, as we have no personal acquaintance.

Froude's mistake was putting in too much of Mrs. Carlyle's Journal and a number of domestic details. I am very far from bored by reassuring letters, being rather tired of the abuse of the London weeklies.—Ever yours truly, J. NICHOL.

Nichol's *Carlyle* will live as the most vivid, truthful, and discriminative bit of criticism, given to the world in short compass, since the sage of Chelsea passed away.

Mrs. M'Cunn, a daughter of Professor Sellar, wrote to him:

"The first result of the coming of your book was to spread dispeace in this household. My husband and I almost quarrelled for the possession of it. He finally carried it off, and nearly finished it at a sitting, and then had to hear much of it over again; for, when sentences and epigrams, and strokes of wit and luminous judgment delighted me, I insisted on reading them aloud to him. I never read pages more full of life. One winced at some of your judgments of Carlyle, but nowhere can one read

more splendid and generous tributes to his entire disinterestedness, his fearlessness, and his magnificent powers."

Professor M'Cunn wrote to Nichol afterwards:

"My selfishness in monopolizing the book, when it came, was, I admit, shameless. The one point on which I had the impudence to differ was in respect of imputed jealousy of contemporaries. That he flung many a missile at them (from a peculiarly well-stocked armoury) is certain. But the motive, as seems to me, was not jealousy, but rather the desire to 'take men down'—a characteristic far from admirable, I dare say, though Scotch; but found often enough when there is no great tincture of jealousy. Had it been jealousy in his case, one might expect to find it most in regard to men whose work was nearest his own in kind. It is not so. He is too impartially aggressive to make it possible to think so. It appears to me that he went to London in the mood of a man ready to suspect that established reputations were either hollow or exaggerated. One may lament this. It was not amiable; although, without it, he would never have been the invaluable satirist and social censor that he is. But the tendency being there, it was it—and not anything so personal, or so small, as jealousy—that set him upon that life-long task of throwing projectiles. Of course, he sometimes showed taste bad enough in the selection of his target; but even in some of his worst assaults (*e.g.* his remarks on Newman), is he not far removed from jealousy?"

As to the remark which Carlyle made on Newman's brain, it is worth remembering that Carlyle was a real humourist; and while his sentence was exceedingly unjust and erroneous—if taken in all the sobriety of a prosaic statement—he would doubtless himself afterwards laugh at his own exaggeration, and this may justify us in saying there was no malice in it at all.

One of Nichol's correspondents—a philosopher—wrote to him thus: "I wish you had said more about Carlyle's relation to Fichte. I cannot but think that he really owed more, at least in a direct way, to him than to Goethe, whom he admired as his opposite, but from whom he did not absorb influences so freely as from Fichte, who

was his like. The coincidences in Fichte's *Characteristics of the Present Age* especially are very marked."

There is no doubt that the literary finish of Nichol's *Carlyle* suffered from its being one of a Series, as very often the writer loses something which he might have gained by independent literary production, and is at the same time cramped as to the treatment of his theme. He could have written a much greater book on Carlyle, if he had a perfectly free hand. Probably his estimate will not be endorsed by posterity as it stands. To judge by the fate of great men in the past, differences in popular estimate and in critical appreciation will last for ever. If we go back to Rome, and take Cicero as an example, there is a certain class of men who will always admire him, another class who will always disparage him. These differences arise from constitutional and temperamental causes. Time only can decide how far any man's work will live; and the twentieth century will assign Carlyle's permanent position in the literature of his country, in a way in which the nineteenth century cannot. One of Nichol's correspondents (a very old friend) wrote to him about Carlyle: "My anticipations are unfavourable to his immortality. If we ever meet in the Elysian Fields, our debts can there be paid. I am prepared to give you 2 to 1, to be paid in 2100 A.D." This correspondent adds, "Ten times as many copies of Macaulay's *Essays* are read by English people throughout the world, as of any book of Carlyle's."

Nichol's picture of the heroic years of Carlyle's life, of his struggles with adversity and an unrecognizing public, is admirable. It is excellent alike in its condensation and its fulness, in what it omits and in what it includes. Its author's literary style is maturer than it was in his earlier books, more crisp, incisive, and epigrammatic. If it be thought that more allowance might have been made for some things that Carlyle said than has been done by his biographer, it must be remembered that the critical eye of the writer was always steadily directed to the subject he had to discuss, and that no larger literary problem as to one's own contemporaries has required discussion in our time.

CHAPTER IX.

VACATION RESORTS AND RAMBLES.

IN the autumn of 1865 Nichol crossed the Atlantic for the first and only time. The American Civil War had just come to an end, and he saw with keen interest many of the leading personalities in the States, and some of the battle-fields connected with that struggle during the course of which his sympathies had been so ardent on the side of the North. He was then full of admiration and hope for most things American, as a few extracts from letters written to his wife during his tour in the States will show. In later life, his feelings towards the Western Republic were, in some respects, less cordial; but for individual men, and for Longfellow in particular, he always cherished the same affection and respect.

He wrote:

"NAHANT, nr. BOSTON, September 10th, 1865.

"I am here by the beautiful sea-shore of New England, spending three days with Longfellow, who is the most delightful man in the whole world. He received me with the utmost cordiality, said he had heard of my arrival in the country, and sent a message inviting me to come to him. He cherishes affectionate remembrances of my father, and seems to have known by report something of myself. We get on most pleasantly, walking about the delicious lanes, and talking in the fresh coast air. Of course I came to the hotel, and only meant to call for him with a note of introduction, which I found quite unnecessary. I sleep here at the inn—a quiet wayside inn like one of those he

writes about—as his cottage is filled by himself and his children,

> Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra,
> And Edith with golden hair,

with whom I found him playing croquet on the lawn, as I walked through his meadow. But he makes me spend all the day with him, and has insisted upon my coming to him at Cambridge when I return to Boston. Best of all, he will come to us when he visits Scotland, which he has never yet done, and means some day to do. I have told him that you will be so happy to see him—won't you? He says his only difficulty is about leaving his children behind. This should confirm me in my feeling that we ought not to leave ours for all the rupees in India.[1] He has taken so much kind interest in my affairs that I have told him of this. He immediately asked what you said about it. I do not think he would have done anything that *his* wife did not wish—the dear man, with his grand sweet face, and flowing grey hair. I have found some one to love, and try to imitate, and will be the better of it ever after. We were talking of the wrangling and jealousies of literary men. He said *the true plan is to let all the fighting be on one side;* and he is right. He said when he was attacked in the papers none of his friends knew of it if he made no answer."

After a few sentences about the heat in Boston, the letter continues:

"On Monday I went to Concord and called for Emerson; he immediately sent for my bag from the inn, and made me stay with him. In his company I spent a very pleasant day. He and his family, a wife, two daughters, and a son, are all that his greatest admirers could wish. On Tuesday night I returned here; on Wednesday I went about town making calls. Wendell Phillips and Garrison are out of town, so I can only hope to see them when I return on the thirtieth of this month. I saw Mrs. Chapman, and was very much charmed with her; she desires to

[1] An educational appointment in one of the Indian Universities, for which Nichol had thought of applying, is here referred to.

be remembered to Mrs. Nichol.[1] Yesterday I went to Worcester, and heard Charles Sumner deliver a great speech. I am invited to attend a dinner of the great literary club of the North, when I return here on the 30th. I shall spend a few days in Boston, and then go on to Longfellow at Cambridge. I have taken and paid for my passage home in the *Cuba*, which sails from Boston on the 11th of October."

"PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA (undated).

"I am tired, having travelled since I wrote to you nearly incessantly; from Newport to New York is a long journey, from New York to Baltimore a longer, from Baltimore to Petersburg the longest. I started from Baltimore yesterday, and ran down the Chesapeake Bay, when I had an opportunity of seeing an American boat race. To-day we sailed up the James river, staying a short time at Fortress Monro, where I went as near as possible to the walls where Jefferson Davis is still in durance awaiting his trial. To-day, or rather this evening, I have been round a great part of the fortifications, and seen the mine which Grant blew up on the rebels. I had an old soldier with me (they abound here) who explained everything, and I carried away with me some bullets and other relics, which I shall bring home. These are very interesting reminiscences of great events, and to-morrow I hope to see to equal advantage the fortifications around Richmond itself. The whole country here is one vast ruin—broken houses, broken fortunes, and broken-down looking people meet one at every corner. Everything I hear in the South, explicitly or implicitly, confirms everything I have heard in the North. Davis seems to be very generally hated by both sections of the people, and he may be hanged without exciting any disturbance. All I said at home now seems to me too mild in praise of the Northern, in dispraise of the Southern cause."

"WASHINGTON, Sunday, Sept. 24th.

"So far, though not very far, I am safe on my way homeward—having passed unscathed, except by the mosquitoes, which were pretty savage, through the late capital and

[1] Mrs. E. P. Nichol, of Huntly Lodge, Edinburgh.

citadel of the late rebel domain. Richmond is hot, and save that the streets are broad and the view from the high parts of the city extensive, not very interesting. I did not care to stay there more than a day, during which I walked about a good deal, and saw most of what is to be seen, the fortifications, which are all made of earth heaped up into hills; the Dutch gap; and the ruins of the large part of the town, which has been burnt. All around in Virginia there is the same prevalent desolation, the punishment of her crimes. I am told that one might ride on a saddle-horse for twelve months and not see all the earthworks and battlefields. Yesterday, after leaving the train, we had a very fine sail up the Potomac. It is a beautiful river, finer, I think, than the James, as the banks are almost equally rich and more elevated. Some time before arriving here we passed Mount Vernon, Washington's delightful home, treasured with a national pride common to North and South. On the way I had some interesting talk with a black missionary, who was returning to Philadelphia after a residence of six months as teacher and preacher in the Carolinas. He tells me that the blacks are very ignorant, scarce a tenth of them can read or write; but they are ready to learn more, he thinks, from one of their own colour than from a white. They are still inclined to distrust the whites, and no wonder. While this gentleman was talking to me, we being in the cabin, he was ordered by the steward of the vessel to move to the steerage, blacks not being allowed among the cabin passengers. The steward told me, apologetically, that they were obliged to adopt this regulation as they had so many Southern passengers.

"Here, this city being directly under the eye of the Government, no such distinctions prevail, and, as far as I can see, every effort is being made to establish a legal equality between the races; but society lags behind the law here, as in England and most civilized countries.

"Washington is a strange town—laid out to be a city of palaces, it is in the main a city of hovels; a few grand marble temples and brick huts between. The Capitol is perhaps the most *magnificent* building I have ever seen, though St. Paul's and Cologne Cathedral are both more

majestic. The Capitol has much the same relation to St. Paul's that Milan has to Cologne. There are many other fine buildings, the offices of state, for instance, are much finer than ours in London. In spite, however, of the grand breadth of the streets, I do not much affect Washington. There is an atmosphere of unrealized and unrealizable ambition about it, which brings into stronger relief than perhaps anywhere else the weak side of the American character."

"LONGFELLOW'S STUDY,
"CAMBRIDGE, October 3rd.

"I wrote to you last from Washington, which I was obliged to leave after all without seeing Mr. Seward. I called at his office on the morning of the day I had planned to leave, and found him inaccessible in the midst of some pressing business. He sent a very polite invitation to me to come to his house in the evening, but as by remaining another day I should have missed Philadelphia altogether, I could not wait. I enjoyed Philadelphia very much after Washington; it is a clean, quiet, restful place, with a number of pleasant people in it. I was especially delighted with the Motts, to whom I was introduced by Mrs. Nichol's letter. They are in every respect attractive, and I fell in love in different ways with three of them at once—grandmother, daughter, and grand-daughter. I talked theology with the first, literature with the second, and looked at the third. I am going to Weymouth in answer to a very kind invitation from Miss Weston, who is now out there with Mrs. Chapman. There I shall meet for the second time Wendell Phillips and Garrison, whom I at last saw yesterday, and with whom I was much delighted. They and others assure me I could make an indefinite sum by lecturing here, if I came out in winter. The fee is one hundred dollars a lecture for first-rate lecturers all over the country, and I am told a course might be arranged by which one might travel lecturing for thirty nights in succession, so making £500. . .

"Longfellow protests against my going to New York, but I am really afraid of making my visit a visitation. This is a most beautiful house, just such a home as he should

have, with one sad blank; fortunately his children prevent it from being desolate. I like him better and better, the more I see of him. We have long talks and walks, and in the evening sometimes I read one of my lectures which he seems to enjoy. The club dinner the other night was delightful. I got into a long talk with Holmes, and found him an excellent conversationalist. America is far better than I dreamt of in almost every respect, especially Boston. I would give my left hand to leave Glasgow and come here, but at present there is no opening. I must publish a book in England and get it made known here. Every one I meet in society is sympathetic, literary or metaphysical, refined beyond the refinement of Englishmen, not to say of Scotchmen, and in the van of the world, not tugging at the rear. Above all there is no Free Church. My church is dominant in New England. We are going this afternoon to dine with Dr. Howe, whose wife assailed me fearfully with metaphysics the other day. She has actually read all through Kant! I am rather alarmed at the idea of dining with her. I am to have Longfellow's brother, and his son, as my companions in the *Cuba*. Is not that a pleasant chance? Kiss the children and believe me, in spite of all the attractions here, impatient to be home."

The following of which the beginning is lost, is an interesting comment both on Carlyle, on Emerson, and on Longfellow:

"With no greater knowledge or culture, and only slightly greater force, Carlyle thinks himself entitled to behave like a bear to any one who comes to see him, unless he has a fame like his own, or a title: for Carlyle, though a very great thinker, is both in writing and speaking a little of a bully. Emerson is a true poet, both in prose and verse, a teacher who teaches without seeming to know it, leading rather than driving, and full of the amenities of life. He has been the acknowledged master of American prose for nearly twenty years, but he still looks a young man, and is really modest without affecting it.

"Meanwhile do not fancy that I falter in my allegiance to Longfellow; he is still to me the dearest of them all,

lovely in life and soul; for, as we gathered from his verse, the terms which are in general reserved for women, seem most properly applied to him; but, as he is the best, I am inclined to think Emerson the greatest, of living Americans. Did I tell you that I saw Hawthorne's old manse, and sailed up the Assabeth with Emerson's son? The little river deserves all Hawthorne's praises, as it flows along with a scarcely perceptible motion, mirroring every leaf and flower that overhangs its beautiful quiet banks."

The foregoing extracts from letters written by Nichol during his American tour, have been printed, because of the interest attaching to the period at which he visited that country, and the eminent men of letters whose personal acquaintance he made during his stay. But in an age that has no lack of descriptive writing of every kind about scenery and places, it would be superfluous, even were the material available, to enter into detail in regard to his wanderings on the European Continent. He was frequently abroad, and, in his earlier years, was something of an Alpine climber. He used to relate, with pardonable self-satisfaction, how one of his mountain guides once lamented that a great athlete had been lost in him. He knew also, more or less well, Western Germany, Brittany, the south of France; and, on British soil outside of his native country, the south and west of England, parts of Wales, and the Channel Islands, to which in 1876 he paid a visit along with his friend Swinburne.

The six months' vacation, which the Scottish University system allows to its students and teachers, was made use of by Nichol sometimes as a complete holiday; more often as a means of devoting himself to purely literary work. In the former case, he went abroad for the greater part of the summer; in the latter, he used to rent a house on the coast or in some country district of Scotland, where, in the intervals of work, he would walk and talk with the friends who came to visit him in his holiday retreat. In his summer residence, especially when any work was to be done, he sought quiet above all things. Few who knew him well do not also know the little group

of houses, silently overwatched by the ruins of Carrick Castle, at the entrance to Loch Goil. From 1879 onwards, during many years, in one or other of these houses he spent the greater portion of his summer holiday. There he was visited, from time to time, by most of his Scotch, and by many of his English, friends. There, too, *The Death of Themistocles* was written in its entirety; and several of his books—such as *Burns*, *American Literature*, *Byron*—were, in great measure, composed or revised.

The following letters, to Mr. John Skelton, and to Dr. Brown of Paisley, were written from this summer home:

CARRICK,
LOCHGOIL, October 21, 1880.

Dear Mr. Skelton,—Your *Crookit Meg* arrived here a post after your letter. She was detained by a breeze the wrong way on the loch; but ran in brightly last night, and behaves herself charmingly under fire of reading. Many thanks for a pleasant evening after a fair day's work.

I have run down here to escape from all noises but those of the lapping waters, and found a sea-bird's nest I would never wish to leave. . . .—Yours very truly,

J. NICHOL.

LITTLEWOOD, CARRICK,
LOCHGOIL, 19th August, 1883.

My dear Brown,—I have just returned from an expedition to the English Lakes, where I was no more fortunate on Hellvellyn with Edward Caird than on Lochnagar with my girls. It was a storm of hail and sleet that nearly blew us over the rocks.

We are now settled here till October 8, and I am overwhelmed in work, having just sent off proof of an article on the Scotch Universities—likely, as usual, to make me friends! being busy with a second edition of the *American Literature*—with ditto of my *Tables*, and being dunned by Knight for his *Bacon* (my third and last biography in B.), and by MacLehose for his *Miscellaneous Essays*, and by

Rivington for the first volume of *English Literature*, which will include the early Scotch period. Therefore, though I would have been glad to have been of any service to you about Ross's book, it is quite impossible. Two years ago I placed in his hands (on his asking me for suggestions about the book) a long and somewhat elaborate "Essay on Early Scotch Literature," published as an introduction to *Lindsay* twelve years ago in the English Text Society's Series.

You should certainly find this among Ross's books or papers. Tell me if you don't, and I shall send you a loan of my only remaining copy the first time I am in Glasgow. It is minute on Lindsay, a powerful polemical writer, scarcely a poet, and embraces a fair statement of what I have to say on the rest from Barbour to Drummond. I could not add to this without going into greater detail than I at present find possible about Douglas's often fine, but frequently careless, and generally diffuse translation. Some of his introductions are remarkably rich, even overladen in their imagery and marked by the keen sense of natural scenery that is a prevailing note of Scotch verse-makers; but our only Pre-Reformation *poets* were James I. and Dunbar. They begin the protest against Puritanism that has been maintained by all the true Scotch poets, not more than six in all ever since. Douglas must, however, be credited with the first serious attempt to translate a classic poet, in our island; for, as some one said, Caxton's *Siege of Troy* no more resembles Virgil than the Devil St. Augustine. . . .—Ever yours sincerely, J. NICHOL.

In earlier days Moffat in Dumfriesshire and Braemar in Aberdeenshire were favourite summer resorts, as in later years was Crieff in Perthshire. In Crieff his book on *Bacon* was written. And, associated as it was with his old student life at Glasgow, he never quite lost his fondness for Rothesay, where he wrote once, "the sea, lapping round the shores of our old Atlantis, brings back sad yet sweetest memories of the long, long past," and where—or rather at Ascog, near it—in 1872, part of *Hannibal* took its final form.

He visited Italy twice, along with his wife and children; on the first occasion going as far south as Sicily. His second period of travel in this country was marked by an incident which, as it is outside the experience of the average tourist, may be briefly referred to. He had for some time carried a sword-stick, whether acquired by accident, or as a species of toy, or as a symbol of his own inherent pugnacity, it is impossible now to decide. One day he was in a shop in Naples, with his daughters, and, wishing to examine a possible purchase, took it in his hands, at the same time giving one of his daughters his stick to hold. To pass the time, she amused herself with drawing it out and in, so as to show an inch or two of the naked steel. They left the shop, and before they had gone more than a few steps down the street, Nichol felt a hand laid on his shoulder, and, turning round, found himself confronted by two gendármes, and by the accusation of having conspired against the life and limb of King Humbert's lieges. At first the minions of the law seemed bent on taking him straight to gaol, but they were ultimately prevailed upon to let him proceed, in custody, to his hotel—where they slept the night to watch over him. So that, for the first and last time in his life, Nichol enjoyed the experience of being conducted to his residence, and into the presence of his wife, between two policemen—his two daughters solemnly, or perhaps not altogether solemnly, marching behind, and a gathering of interested and irreverently-jocular *gamins* bringing up the rear. Next day he was taken to the police court, where, he used to say, he remembered the grin of brotherly welcome with which he was saluted by a manacled and murderous-looking malefactor. The whole incident (from one point of view it might seem to have stepped out of one of Offenbach's Opera-Bouffes) had, in spite of its comic elements, a serious side, and in the case of an utterly unknown man, might have had gravely disagreeable consequences. Nichol was strongly advised by various English acquaintances made in Naples to bolt from the country, but he characteristically preferred to face and fight the matter out. Fortunately, his friend Mr. Bryce, then under-secretary for foreign affairs, telegraphed at once to Rome; another friend, Mr. Jacob

Bright, gave him an introduction to the English ambassador there, Sir Savile Lumley; and, after much worry and some expense, the tragi-comedy terminated in the form of a trial at Naples, which acquitted Nichol of the charge of belonging to the criminal classes.

He was angry for a time, and the whole experience did not increase the restrained admiration which his Scandinavian temperament always felt for the dwellers in the South of Europe; although it did not affect his fondness for continental travel. When he resigned his Glasgow chair it was for some time a moot point with him whether to live abroad, or to buy or build a house, in which to pass the evening of his days, in the loved seclusion and quietude of Carrick. Ultimately, however, he decided to establish himself in London.

The following cock-crow story, from the Rev. Canon Rawnsley, is worth reproduction:

CROSTHWAITE VICARAGE,
KESWICK, March 2, 1896.

I shall never forget the visit Nichol paid me at Wray on Windermere after his visit to Edward Caird in Patterdale. For he gave me the most grotesque account of how the Patterdale cock had been dealt with. The bird of dawn, it appears, abounds in that valley. You will recall how Wordsworth, when he was on tramp with his sister Dorothy thereabout, noticed it as he leaned upon the bridge at the foot of Brother's Water, and described the sounds of the bright spring day, when—while the "waters were flowing, and the cattle were lowing, and the sheep boy whistling, anon, anon"—the cocks were all "crowing." Poor Nichol had not been prepared for this, and came down to breakfast on the first morning after his arrival, with cock-crow on the brain. You remember how agitated and nervous he would become, when he was distressed by harsh sounds or hard sayings; and that the plague was pronounced incurable by the landlady nearly sent him into a fit.

Caird, ever calm and kind, determined that something must be done. Nichol at once offered substantial reward for every head of a cock that should be brought him

before nightfall. But the Patterdalians value fresh-laid eggs exceedingly, and no heads appeared.

A solemn procession was then made to sundry farms, where they were told "they hed cocks for certain, but they nevver crawed nowt, not as *they* cud hear hooiiver" . . . Nichol was however persistent, and showed that the nature of this nuisance, if not likely to bring the owners within reach of serious litigation, would certainly afford matter for a letter to the Press with probable ruin for Patterdale. "We come here for rest, and you give us a cock to crow at us from night to morning, a cock that has a hundred other cocks to answer him, a cock that gets on peoples' brains and drives them mad!"

The fervour of the professor, and the solemn assent of his friend, the philosopher—who explained that sleep was really a vital necessity for his invalid companion—had the effect of softening not the voices of the cock-a-doodles, but the hearts of their owners. And it was forthwith agreed that, as soon as the cows were milked, the cocks should be hunted up each evening, and put into the inmost recesses of the barn-steadings. There they might crow, but their sound would, at least, be hushed, and the professor would only hear them as in a dream. Rewards were to be given, at the end of the visit, but woe to the owner of the unhunted cock. It was a simple but satisfactory remedy. The professor found peace, and sleep, in Patterdale. I can hear him tell the story now, but cannot reproduce the inimitable humour, and the fierce flashing of his wrath, as he anathematized the bird of dawn whom he spoke of as the bird of the devil.

The rest of his visit was taken up with wandering to Wordsworth's school-boy haunts at Hawkhead, and with talk about the poets, as was his wont. I gathered that he felt he had not done his best work in poetry; and that he wished much for strength, and health, and quiet, to do more. These never came to him.

CHAPTER X.

LIFE IN LONDON.

A. *1890.*

JOHN NICHOL spent the years 1889 and 1890 mostly in Scotland, and in the south of France, including a few days in North Italy. At Turin, he saw once more, after a long interval, his old friend Louis Kossuth. In the autumn of 1890 he settled definitely in London with his family, taking, in the first instance, a furnished house in Redcliffe Gardens, South Kensington. With the exception of a lecture on Carlyle, delivered to the members of an Ethical Society in Essex Street Hall, he made no public appearance while residing at Redcliffe Gardens. The subject selected for this lecture indicated that his book on Carlyle was beginning to take shape.

He was now past the age when men care, as a rule, to make many new friends or acquaintances; but, on coming to London, he had the opportunity of renewing personal intercourse with a considerable number whom he had partially lost sight of, through distance, or other causes, or whom he had known less well before. Among these friends were James Bryce, Briton Rivière, W. P. Ker, Mrs. Lynn Linton, and Mrs. Von Glehn. The last-named had, as Miss Bradley, in the old days of his lectures to ladies, attracted his attention as a brilliant essayist. Occasionally there came a visit to Putney, and talks with Mr. Swinburne and Mr. Theodore Watts at "The Pines." During these months he paid the last of many visits to Balliol; and—save for a short interview when the late Master was in

London, in September, 1893—had his final sight of his old teacher. A still older teacher, Mr. Lushington, now also passed away, was seen at a somewhat later date at his home near Maidstone.

The following is the last letter that Nichol received from Jowett:

BALLIOL COLLEGE, Aug. 31st, 1893.

My dear Nichol,—Will you write a line and tell me how you are, and how Mrs. Nichol is, and what you are doing? It is now nearly three years since we parted at the Crieff Railway Station, and I have had no authentic tidings of you since. For more than a year I had a set of *Plato* waiting for you; but, having received no answer to a letter which I wrote asking you to come here, I did not send it. (Shall I send it now?) But I cannot forget your old affection and attachment, and, if I never saw you and Mrs. Nichol again, should always have it lying at the bottom of my heart.

You may have heard of a dangerous illness which I had about two years ago. I got over that (though I have a tendency to suffer from relapses of it). However, I mean to brush it off, and, please God, to live for a few years longer.

I hope you have not given up literary projects. The last one which I have seen, *Bacon*, appeared to me very successful, and I hear the *Carlyle* well spoken of. What a turmoil of passion that life was. Yet he gave expression to some element of our age which was needed. I am told that Popitsnovteff, the Russian Emperor's ecclesiastical adviser, is a great reader and admirer of him.

It seems a long time, and things and people have changed —how many of our friends?—since I first came to see you at the Observatory in Glasgow, and afterwards at Moffat, very many times since in Montgomery Crescent. I cannot myself complain of old age. It has left me still many friends, and the recollections of many others who are gone, which have a great comfort and pleasure in them. I no longer go so far as Scotland, but you and Mrs. Nichol will, I hope, come to see me again at Balliol, and talk over old times.

I have read lately a book which has greatly delighted me: Captain Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power on History*, and on the Napoleonic Powers especially. The book is American, and yet quite faultless in point of taste; it is also perfectly impartial, and shows immense knowledge of the subject. It touches the "whereabouts" of the future in war, not altogether a pleasant contemplation for England. Do get it, and read it—you will pass a fortnight very pleasantly in doing so.

The only other book that I have been reading is Grant Duff's account of Renan—a very good and kindly book, though not considerable. Renan must have been a much greater and better man than we are accustomed to think him in England. But then he has fallen under an Ecclesiastical Ban. I don't like these ecclesiastical bans. They make me think, as I get older, that the power of the Church has increased, and (in England) is increasing, and ought to be diminished.

I said that this was the "only other book," but I now remember another well worth reading. C. H. Pearson on National Character is very instructive, I think, though crotchety, like the author of it. It is one of the metaphysical books about Politics—an aspect of the science which, though I have not much fancy for it, seems to be coming over the world.

With most kind regards to Mrs. Nichol.—Believe me, ever yours, B. JOWETT.

Is your kind good stepmother (who used to keep a terrific mastiff) still living? If she is, I should wish to be remembered to her.

In London, as in Glasgow, and at his holiday resorts, Nichol was acutely susceptible to physical influences. As years went on he felt the terrible strain of "the pandemonium of noise;" barrel organs, the barking of dogs, the street cries, all inflicted positive pain upon him. He had been driven from one pleasant place by what he called "a perfect hurricane of cocks," interfering with his work alike by day and night. The charm of his old retreat at Carrick was its perfect peacefulness, broken only by the

lapping of the waters and the cry of the sea-fowl. In town he felt the winter frosts acutely. In one letter he wrote: "London to-day should be erecting temples to the great god Thaw. Long life to him, and more power, who uncloses our long-sealed lips, and makes possible the utterance of our long frozen brains."

During these late London years he was asked to go to Liverpool to lecture to its University College. He went, and gave a singularly noble address on "The teaching of English Literature in our Universities, and its relation to Philology." It was delivered under great physical weakness. He was scarcely able to travel, or to stand up to lecture; but he was not the man to cancel an engagement, unless prostrate by infirmity. The address is full of life and seriousness, touched all through with humanity, *vehemens, pressus, et instans sibi.*

I have no doubt that his experience of the preference of a philologist to a man of letters in the English Literature Chair at Oxford some time previously, gave rise to a good deal that was said in this address. To vindicate Philology as superior to Literature seemed to him as monstrous as it would be for the builder of a house to insist that before the joiners and carpenters began work they must have a scientific knowledge of Botany or Forestry. What he felt essential in the work of every class devoted to English Literature was teaching, (1) as to what was most worth knowing, and (2) as to how best to know it.

The Liverpool lecture was a valuable contribution to a subject of supreme interest. Greek and Latin had been, in certain quarters, as all men knew, underrated as Literature, and made more of as a *linguistic discipline.* At the English Universities this was partly due to the exigencies of the examination-system. But Nichol saw that to teach English (or any) Literature, chiefly with a view to secure "firsts" in the examination list, was as bad as is the work of the modern "crammer" for other Universities. These terrible "crammers," whose work has often been so pernicious to the real student, were his detestation.

There is no doubt that much might be said in defence

of *Language versus Literature* by a partizan, because some persons have been known to write books on subjects belonging to a literary realm, in which they would themselves have been "ploughed" by an ordinary examiner. If *sound* scholarship is wanted, a knowledge of Language is a prime necessity, as radical as is a knowledge of Mathematics to Physics, or of Anatomy to Surgery. At the same time, to test the merits of an English scholar by his acquaintance with out-of-the-way minutiæ belonging to the literature of the thirteenth century, is as bad and futile as it would be to decide the claims of a philosophical theologian, as an expert in that science, solely by his capacity to digest the radishes of Arabic analysis in the morning, and in the evening to dine on Hebrew roots. Every one knows the value of linguistic study, if it does not extinguish literary knowledge, and appreciation. If it is made the one end of culture, the student becomes a pedant, "dry-as-dust."

Nichol was hardly able to get through the strain of the delivery of this lecture, and of the succeeding ceremonial in Glasgow, when he was presented with his portrait by old students and friends.

B. *HIS PORTRAIT.*

After he had been some time Professor-Emeritus, his old students, his former-colleagues, and other friends, considered it a right as well as a graceful thing to present him with his portrait, and asked him to sit to an eminent artist. The proposal was met by very many with enthusiasm, and Mr. Orchardson, R.A., was selected for the work. It is needless to print the long list of subscribers, although it was a remarkable evidence of the esteem in which Professor Nichol was held by many hundreds of his contemporaries. The portrait was painted, shortly after he had settled at Redcliffe Gardens, South Kensington. The sittings, to which he had looked forward with some fear that they might be irksome, proved on the contrary—thanks to the artist's gifts, both as talker and listener—a source of much enjoyment; and the picture, when completed, was one of Mr. Orchardson's most successful efforts.

It was presented to Nichol at a meeting in the Randolph Hall, Glasgow, on the 25th November, 1891—Principal Caird presiding. No one present on that November afternoon could doubt the gratification which Nichol felt in the hearty and widespread desire to do him honour.

After the formalities of presentation were ended, Nichol made a speech in reply, which his friends will be glad to possess in full. He said:

"My friends, students, and colleagues, I have often been publicly hissed, but I never remember on those occasions to have felt much ashamed of myself. I am ashamed to-day; not only because I have listened to expressions of praise which I have not merited, but because in some instances I feel that I have failed to appreciate the amount of kindliness entertained towards me. There are few things harder than adequately to acknowledge kindness, save by attempting some action worthy of it, and that is rarely done. The difficulty in my instance is many times multiplied by the fact that my benefactors are so numerous. I must ask you to credit me, in these days when speeches are apt to be received with an often not unjust suspicion—I ask you to credit me with so much sincerity as to believe that the intimation of your generous resolve to present this picture came to me equally as a gratification and a surprise. I never before, for obvious reasons, thought of myself in the light of a possible presentee. The best I ever hoped from my countrymen, from the majority of whom I have often dared to differ, was to be forgiven. Now I find that a number of them, in far excess of my deserts, have paid me a high compliment.

"Some here present must have been concerned in what has been referred to as 'the conspiracy' from the first conception of it. When I heard of it being in process, I ventured, in a letter to the secretary, to deprecate the form which your kindness has taken. But Mr. MacLehose and others were inexorable. The arrangements of the committee had been made so quietly, not to say secretly, and the names of my friends enlisted with such careful discretion, that when I received the list I felt that I had

never been more surprised—seldom as gratified in my life. The conspirators, by happy inspiration, so managed matters as to make every stage in the process pleasant.

"About nine months ago I was travelling in an underground train with a gentleman, notable for his sagacity and *finesse*, who has the habit of always pointing his remarks and often putting questions. He asked me where I was going. I told him to a studio, and, strange as it might appear, to be painted, and I named the artist. My critical friend said he had heard of what Mr. Campbell has referred to as 'this business,' and added that the painter was wont to complain of having all the talking with his subjects or objects to do himself. 'He won't have that to do in your case,' he had just time to say before I left the carriage. I am not quite sure how it was meant, because we had been talking politics, and on opposite sides. But I know that Mr. Orchardson's conversation was so bright, and his fund of anecdote—which often recalled to my mind the lamented Sir Daniel Macnee—so various, that the hours that I had looked forward to as purgatorial were always too short, and I regretted when these Attic forenoons came to an end. I consider it a high compliment to have been allowed to occupy so much of the time of a man of such versatile genius.

"But I have more to do here with the conspirators than with the chief actor in this benevolent execution. Despite of all the kind exaggerations of this afternoon, I still fail to see on what grounds my head and shoulders have been so artistically taken off, save that I have spent a long time between the banks of the Molendinar and the Kelvin, and done work there, some of it 'indifferent honest,' a deal of it fighting against things, some of which may have been good, but all of which I thought were bad. This is not the place for controversy, but I am in nowise penitent for having so often expressed my belief that, although the chief concern of a teacher is with his scholars and his scholarship, he is on no account called upon to consider himself debarred from taking an interest, and, if he can, playing a part, *i.e.* from exercising all the rights of a citizen, in the community by which he is environed, or the State to which he be-

longs. On the contrary, it seems to me that his service to the Muses ought to render him only the more fit to contend with the Idols of the Market Place. I do not wish to trench on dangerous ground; but during these years I have known three of those Idols esteemed 'high above the rest' by 'overwhelming majorities' in this second city of the Empire. One of these was practically extinguished on the great field of Gettysburg. He was an American. Another was blotted out at Sedan. He was a Frenchman. The third reminds me of Herodotus when he refers to 'one whom I must not name.' He is not by any means blotted out; and I cannot tell you to what country he belongs, because his nationality is of so peculiar a nature that it varies with his geographical position.

"On my retirement, which I regret to have found no reason to feel premature, I was, in length of service, the senior professor in the Senate with the exception of Sir William Thomson and Professor Grant: by ancestry and pupilage I am junior only to the former, my father having been appointed to the Chair of Astronomy in the year 1836, among his competitors being Thomas Carlyle. I ought to know something about the University. But this is not the time to attempt to estimate what that great Institution has done for the West of Scotland or to balance the chances and changes of fortune which affect it for better or for worse. Its authorities have been accommodating to the expressions of public opinion of which we have heard so much: and I trust they will have their reward.

"My connection with this University, as a student from 1848-1854, and as a teacher from 1861-1889, has lasted over most of my life, and left behind it inevitably lasting and various impressions. After my student days I was, thirty years ago, returned here, as a bad penny, from another *Alma Mater*, to attempt to inaugurate a new subject not always very easy to teach. The difficulties I think have been exaggerated; but they have appeared to some minds so insurmountable that it has been asserted, imperiously if not authoritatively, that English cannot be taught at all. On the controversy now so rife in connection with the English Universities I only

venture at present to make one or two remarks. It seems to me that the arguments, especially of the chief opponent of the recognized and regulated study of English Literature, hang upon a few premises which are all demonstrably false. The first of these is that the main object, almost the sole object of a University, is to examine. The question of the relation of the examiner to education is difficult and complex; but I suppose almost every one here will agree with me that a University is such precisely because it has other and higher objects than mere examination.

"The second presumption is that it is impossible to examine on any subject in which there is not practically complete agreement of opinion. Putting aside the slight on University examiners, I would ask, if that is so, on what subject above the reach of the dame or common school is it possible to examine at all? You could, of course, still examine in arithmetic, and euclid, and upon the elements of grammar; but the moment you begun to theorize, even about grammar, you would find yourself in a world of often pretty keen controversy. This almost absurdly negative argument assumes another form, when it is alleged that the knowledge and mastery of our own language is too fine a subject to be taught. Is it finer, we may ask, than the arts of music or of painting? You cannot, it has been said, 'hammer,' 'drive,' or 'grind' into a man the niceties of English style; our Universities cannot manufacture Arnolds and Ste.-Beuves. Who ever imagined that they could? It is a platitude to say that genius is an inheritance or a gift; but the capacity to utilize it may almost indefinitely be increased by careful culture. We cannot manufacture Carlyles or Froudes, Hegels or Newtons; but the due appreciation of their works is often the result of training and of time.

"The remaining assumption in the series of misconceptions to which I have been referring is that there is no possible standard of Taste. Fully to discuss this point would lead us into a metaphysical argument; but it is only necessary to appeal to History to show that while there may be endless differences of opinion about our contemporaries, there is very little divergence as regards our great authors when

they have been sufficiently far removed from us to enable us to judge of their works apart from the mists and frolics of the mannerisms of the day. There are some of our so-called critics, for example, who prefer Walt Whitman to either Longfellow or Lowell; others who regard Lewis Morris as a greater poet than William Morris—and so forth. But no one now prefers Ben Jonson to Shakespeare; or Cleveland and Davenant to Milton; or Klopstock's *Messiah* to Heine's songs, all which preferences have been notable in the past.

"Leaving this debatable ground, it is now my duty and my privilege to offer my heartfelt thanks to those of my colleagues, who have throughout my whole course of teaching here—sometimes an uphill one—given me as much encouragement as I had any claim to. From my best students I have every year received such support and sympathy, that I have expressed my sense of it on every opportunity, and cannot weary you, especially in this hour of dusk, with the ten times told tale of how they have responded to my exhortation to think mainly of their work, and in a very minor degree of its often precarious rewards.

"Many of the most distinguished of these students are now scattered abroad, literally from Gades to Ganges, from Dunedin to Chicago, teaching not only the graces of the English tongue, but training students of every hue to appreciate the beauty, and the sublimity, and the wisdom of our classics, and so spreading the best part of our Empire over the globe. Their success as teachers must depend largely on the natural gifts of speech, of command, and of sympathy. Half the task of the teacher is to know his subject; but his inspiration is dramatic power, the power of sincerely entering into the minds of his pupils, and vividly realizing their circumstances. Others of the group, deservedly conspicuous in the pursuit of their professions, well understand that there is no profession in which the careful study of English composition, and some familiarity with the thought and style of our leading authors, is not, quite apart from the pleasure it adds to life, a source of practical gain. It is, for instance, well known to lawyers that mistakes, constantly arising from simple clumsiness,

have been the source of some of the most apparently interminable and expensive suits at law.

"Had this gift been made by my students alone, it would have had a value to me not easy to estimate; but, half in rebuke, half in exhortation, it has a wider source. I am about to ask leave to re-convey the picture which has been presented to me; but the list which I hold here in my hand I will never give away. I shall keep it and cherish it to the end of my life. To single out from the names here recorded those of the men to whom I am most indebted, would be invidious. Some are more prominent in the world, some closer to myself than others; but they are all my friends, many of whom have stood by my side, amid all differences of opinion, through good report and ill. There are among them old teachers whose instruction and guidance I shall never find it possible to forget; there are fellow students of the past, compeers and competitors without rivalry; physicians whose healing hand has soothed hours of depression; lawyers who have helped me over banking shoals; and clergymen as genial as they have been true. To have been admitted to the confidence of so many large-minded men ought to soften, if not wholly remove, the asperities of bygone fights. If I may be permitted any special reference, it must be mainly confined to those who have been, in the short interval of the last two years, removed alike from the reach of praise or blame.

"This list contains the name of one of the best friends that I or any man ever had, whose position and deserved celebrity in our literature have been referred to already this afternoon; but I cannot forbear adding my own tribute of affection and regret to the memory of one of the broadest and most graceful scholars ever sent from this University to the South. During the last ten years he was my most sympathetic literary and political associate, and our intimacy had gone on increasing till I felt towards William Sellar almost as towards an elder brother. Another name is that of one whose death was more especially a loss to this city—a leading member of our University Court—a Glasgow man in a sense, but of fine and various culture, the owner of a princely library—the contents of

which he *read*—above all a man of generous sympathies and comprehensive grasp, as well as practical power and strength of will, Dr. A. B. M'Grigor. This day is overshadowed by a more recent cloud. Only half an hour before coming into this room, I was almost stunned by the intelligence of the sudden death of the predecessor to the gentleman whom you are about to inaugurate to-morrow.

"Lord Lytton was, like our present Lord Rector, one of those men of rare versatility, who unite in themselves powers and capacities generally far apart; he was a poet as well as a statesman, a diplomatist and a writer of romance. I can speak of him emphatically as one of the most careful and kindly critics, whether for reproof, instruction, or encouragement, I have ever been fortunate enough to meet. On the other hand, to those whose special interests are centred in Education, the danger has been averted of an even gloomier loss. It is only some six weeks ago since one of the greatest teachers who ever lived seemed to be passing from us. Fortunately he is restored to be a source of light, wisdom, and loving-kindness, let us hope, for many years to come. I refer, of course, to the Master of Balliol. I cannot resist a closing reference to another of our Rectors, the sole nominee I have known elected to that high office with unopposed acclaim, that of an older master to me than even Mr. Jowett—Professor Lushington, *clarum et venerabile nomen*—a scholar at home alike among the inscriptions of the Acropolis and the Pyramids, whose gentle grace alone could avail to disarm the awe of his learning.

"Mr. Principal, my gratitude seems to take the form often attributed to that quality, when I close by requesting another favour. I venture to ask you, and my recent colleagues, for the sake of the artist, whose fame is secured in London where reputations are not readily made—for the sake of the artist, if not on my own unworthy account—to receive this picture within the walls of the Institution where I have had the honour of introducing a subject for which there was an urgent need, and which may, under happier auspices, advance to great conclusions,—an Institution in which I have spent many pleasant and some anxious

hours. I request the acceptance of the picture by the University."

The following letter to Mr. Skelton refers amongst other things to the portrait:

14 MONTGOMERIE CRESCENT, KELVINSIDE,
GLASGOW, June 18 (Waterloo Day), 1890.

Dear Mr. Skelton,—I had your *Arcadian Summer* in our Chalet Mimosa, beautiful and comfortless, during an Arcadian winter at Valescure, near St. Raphael, on the Riviera. But I was lazy and gouty—for the last of which ailments I found my great good remedy at Aix-les-Bains —and find myself now on return here, for three months flitting, before leaving "for good" or "ill," still your debtor for an acknowledgment of your gift. The little book seems to me one of the best of your rôle—*i.e.* a quaint and unique "blend"—better than either Talisker or Long John (which has got over all Aix)—of humour, subtle satire, and perfect picture-painting. A propos, I find your name among the victims of a worse than gunpowder plot, which I would certainly have undermined had I known in time, to paint, draw, quarter, and hang me. Indeed I would rather be tatooed, it is cheaper and easier (an Irish landlord, the other day, showed me his arm permanently marked for £1, with a figure of Gladstone, and behind a well-aimed and I trust sharp-pointed boot), and I have groaned under the Portrait mania. It is worse than that for Japanese Art. But it were a gross compliment, did I not feel gratified at the list of names of friends, whom I am proud to think such, collected under this vile persuasion.

I have remonstrated with the "promoters" by every quotation I can muster, as "We will proceed no further in this business"; but they reply, "Give us the brushes." On one condition I, however, insist that there is to be no City of Glasgow Bank "call," which would be hard on many of my good old students, in the matter; but that I must "sit" if at all, to some young rising artist, and only for a cod's head and shoulders. I am in a whirl of preparations for Exodus, dividing the books I can no longer command, etc, and also preparing for printing at last the series of my

Lectures, which a London publisher has demanded. I come home from the Riviera, as ignorant of what has been going on in Letters, as "Rip Van W." In politics everything is risky. These Parnellites and their friends—"we are not ruled by murderers, but only by their friends"—think of nothing but of upsetting everything. The next "yell" will be falsetto-patriotic, against the cession of Heligoland, by which really we should lose nothing; but the new emperor is a casket, whether of gold, silver, or lead is yet to be seen.—Ever yours, J. NICHOL.

C. *EPISODES.*

Professor Sellar's death in 1890 was a great shock to Nichol. They were the closest friends. Writing at that time to a member of the family, he said:

"I feel benumbed, as I have never been by any event (outside my own small circle) since the death of Mr. Luke at Oxford, and have no words at all to write to your mother. Words are mere vapour, save to say that one of my very few links with Scotland is snapped; and its skies grown colder since the friend, who, on matters public and private, most closely sympathized with me is gone."

Again, writing to me from London, on November 18, 1890, and referring to the death of our common friend, James Brown of Paisley, he spoke of it as breaking "my last link to the pristine days, when he and I fought for Tennyson and Carlyle for our Rectors, and—in days when Conservatism was in the *popularis aura* of the college—helped to carry over their heads tournament-Eglinton and the Duke of Argyll." He characterized Brown, and added:

"These constant funerals remind me of a remark on one of Webster's or Ford's plays, to the effect that, at the close, there were not enough people left alive on the stage to decently bury the dead.

"We are walking in the twilight, in a thinned land, and should keep close together."

On the death of another friend, William Bell Scott, in 1891, he wrote:

32 REDCLIFFE GARDENS,
SOUTH KENSINGTON, S.W., January 26, 1891.

Dear Miss Boyd,—William Scott was a man of as undoubted genius as his brother, and in some respects of a stronger character; but with, if possible, less about him to attract the mob which both of them, with no easily assumed affectation, but with equal sincerity, disdained. How he reconciled this attitude with his pronounced democracy I found it hard to understand. It was as if Coriolanus had been elected a Tribune of the People. Yet there was much of the same apparent contradiction in the minds of Byron and Shelley.

The grief of a great personal loss is at first benumbing, like the terrible frost. Later we ask what can be done to commemorate in some fitting way the gracious kindliness and marked originality of a mind in some ways unique: and I trust the task may be undertaken by some of Scott's artist friends, who alone are qualified to pronounce on his artistic work. You, who have done more for him than perhaps any one else, would be best qualified, if your strength avails, for the task. All I can do is to add to the expression of my sense of another blank among my elder friends, my thanks for the days of sunshine which two years ago your hospitality permitted me to pass at Penkill.—Ever yours gratefully,

J. NICHOL.

In a letter written to me during the same month, he describes the terrific fog, and other miseries, which led him to escape from England for a time:

"To see if Sterne was right in thinking 'they manage these things better in France' (by the way, he only heard this said), I got out of the dismal swamp or tunnel of the fog in crossing the Channel, and found myself at the North Pole. The cold was even keener, but there was a gleam of sun, in which my friends, including those at the Embassy, gave me cordial welcome; and I had as pleasant a week as one can have while shivering. But, to avoid the weariness of the Calais and Boulogne routes, and to let my son see St. Ouen, I was weak enough to return by Rouen and Dieppe on Friday 16th, the coldest

night of the year on the Channel: and so frozen, that since my return, I have been laid up with a touch of gastric fever. However, I have kept clear of 'crossing the bar'—not that I fear it, but I want a few years' more work—and am allowed to walk for a little in this balmy spring. I trust it may not prove a Vivian.

"I am more and more persuaded that I have come here *ten years too late;* a decade ago I could have . . . but now I suspect I am not equal to it, and shall end by retiring to the country—whether to England, or Scotland, or France—and thence writing some *anonymous* work, that I shall strain every nerve to make both interesting and honest."

The following was to his friend, John Skelton:

32 REDCLIFFE GARDENS,
SOUTH KENSINGTON, S.W., January 24, 1891.

Dear Mr. Skelton,—On returning from a run to frozen Paris, I found a week since another of your charming pastorals of the sea, but I am only now sufficiently thawed even to send these meagre thanks. I wonder if Johnson's *Breezy Langton* spoke as you write: it is, after our fogs and dirty London snows, like a dip in the fresh brine. You must have been told how easy it is to turn your descriptive prose into verse. For example, I transcribe on the reverse several lines almost word for word from the early pages—a work of three minutes [1]—for curiosity, protesting that I much

[1] From summer isles, across a summer sea,
Through lanes of liquid light, from shore to shore,
These breeze-born pages bring afresh to me
The cliffs and crags and surging tides of yore.
I hear the curlew's wail, the heron's cry,
The splash of seals, the beat of viewless wings,
Breaking the stillness of the earth and sky
With northern minstrelsy of magic strings.
To the inland marsh the grey-lag flaps his way,
The waves are swirling round the eider's nest;
And 'Darkest England' wakens with the lay
Where the White Eagle speeds the parting guest.

Not that of the canting quack ——; but that in which, for eight weeks, we have scarcely either lived or moved or had our being.

prefer the good prose to the poor verse. Indeed, for the last two months I have been able to write nothing but a few letters, save a short notice of that "kindly Scot" James Brown, in *Good Words*, almost useless under a statute of limitations that have made the notice like a nut between nut-crackers. I seem to have been existing, not living, in a tunnel, the only ray of light being the fine modern comedy of Parnell's "*O Sheum cum dignitate.*" I am collecting subscriptions for a white marble statue of the lady to be set in Hyde Park. I have only arranged a few of the commandments of the New Decalogue.

Thou shalt have no other gods but me. . . .
Thou shalt dishonour thy Fatherland.
Thou shalt steal.
Thou shalt bear false witness.
Thou shalt do *all manner of murder.*
But thou shalt not be found in a fire-escape.

—Ever yours truly, J. NICHOL.

In the spring of 1891, Nichol removed with his family to Hampstead, and remained in this quarter of London for about a year. He lectured once or twice, by invitation, in various parts of London. But his chief work at this time was his *Carlyle*, in connection with which he became an active and prominent member of the Carlyle Society, whose president, Dr. Eugene Oswald, he had known for some years. He addressed the Society several times on Carlyle, or on subjects connected with him, and took frequent part in its debates. At this time, also, he was persuaded to join the Devonshire Club, composed partly of "Gladstonians," partly of Liberal-Unionists. He felt qualms of conscience at the idea of being ranked even among the latter as a "Liberal," so much had his political opinions changed since his youth; or, as he would have preferred to express it, so rapidly had the world progressed downhill since then. It was the first time that he had belonged to a Club, since the days of the Oxford Union, for he had never cared to join any. He was much dependent on sympathy, was fond of conversation, and, in certain respects, decidedly social. But he never cared about mere acquaintances, a

relationship which necessarily involves a certain amount of tolerance for conventions, and trivialities of talk. He was not really capable of supporting solitude, but he preferred that to the society of any but his more or less intimate friends, or persons whom he found genuinely interesting. Hence his almost life-long ignorance of clubs and club-life. He was, in no sense, "a man of the world."

For recreation he indulged, during these London years, in a considerable amount of theatre-going, of which he was always fond. In the autobiography of his earlier days he has himself related how, when he was taken as a child to see *Ivanhoe* acted, he shook his fists at the Templar, who was torturing the Jew, and called out "You villain." To a very considerable extent, something of this childish feeling remained in the man. He went to the theatre, as he read a novel, not so much to admire good acting, or the skilful construction of dialogue or plot, as to sympathize with the hero and the heroine; and, above all, perhaps, to denounce the weak and wicked characters in the play.[1] He never could have understood the saying of Keats that the true artist "has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen." He detested Iagos, even imaginary ones, too heartily, and never thought of them but to consign them to the lowest depths of the *Inferno*. He permitted himself, indeed, on occasion, an almost Dantesque license of condemnatory language, in regard to persons or things he found hateful,—a tendency to picturesque verbal ferocity which certainly did not diminish with the lapse of years; but when, for instance, he spoke of wishing to see "hanged," or "blown from the mouth of cannon," or hurled "from the Tarpeian rock," any eminent statesman whom he conceived to be ruining his country, those who knew him best, knew that—had the opportunity actually offered itself—he would have been the first to stay the executioner's hand; as he was, in fact, often the first to laugh after giving utterance to any exceptional violence of phrase.

[1] Mr. Theodore Watts, in an article which appeared in the *Athenaeum* shortly after Nichol's death, uses the suggestive phrase, "his brave boyishness."

To his old student friend, and publisher, he wrote:

5 HAMPSTEAD HILL GARDENS,
LONDON, N.W. (January, 1892).

Dear MacLehose,—The weather here is wolfish, but we are above most of the fog, and the so-called influenza—present king of terrors—seems more of a fever than a cold. There is certainly something very tragic in the royal death. *Tu Marcellus eris;* of course everyone is recalling Byron's lines on the Princess Charlotte. Manning dying on the same day, almost at the same hour, was impressive.—Ever yours truly, J. NICHOL.

Of the later years of his life Dr. Mackennal writes:

"After the summer of 1854 we seldom met. Nor did we write each other frequently. But the old intimacy continued. When we did meet it was on the old terms of absolute frankness; and, amid many divergences of opinion, with a complete understanding of each other's integrity. Almost to the last we could laugh aloud with and at one another; we used no measure in our speech; we were not afraid of paradox; we could leap over large spaces in argument in our readiness to catch each other's meaning. We seemed to be moving on the surface of things, but our real converse was deep down where politics and ethics and religion spring from one source. We were not afraid of grave talk. 'I am a Christian,' Nichol said to me in one of our last talks; and he went on to add that he was a Unitarian, and that his father had been the same.[1] In a letter I got from him, not many weeks before he died, he referred very sadly to the loss of his Balliol friends, Jowett and Pater and Symonds; to the absence also of all the old Glasgow circle except myself, from whom he felt divided by 'a great gulf,' so that he had been even afraid to send me his *Life of Carlyle.* The reference was to my sympathy

[1] This may mislead. Nichol and I discussed religious problems continually. It would have been as accurate had he called himself a Catholic, as a Unitarian. Neither he, nor his father, ever belonged to the Unitarian community. But he had intense sympathy with, and admiration for, its representative leader and genius, Dr. Martineau, and there were few men whom he more profoundly revered in his later days.

with General Booth's social scheme, as well as to my advocacy of the Home Rule policy; and, of course, it touched me deeply. He wished me to call on him in London, if before my next visit he had not 'gone to Woking'; and I was looking forward to the visit with mingled feelings. I was sure that the friendship would prove itself firm, and that our sympathies would reveal themselves as essentially the same, notwithstanding the divergence in many of our opinions, but I dreaded seeing the old friend who had sent me so sorrowful a letter. Neither my confidence nor my fear found the opportunity of realization; the next thing was the announcement of his death. Our meeting is deferred to the 'all-reconciling world.'"

In the spring of 1892 Nichol again changed his quarters, and took a lease of No. 11 Stafford Terrace, Kensington, a home destined to be, for both husband and wife, their last on earth. Comparatively quiet summer quarters were found at Bognor in Sussex, where Nichol finally finished his *Carlyle*. While at Bognor, he was invited to be present at the Shelley centenary celebration at Horsham; and there, on being asked to propose a vote of thanks to the chairman, made a speech which, considering that it was composed entirely on the spur of the moment, was recognized by all present to be strikingly eloquent. This, his last *impromptu* speech in public, contained, with much else, the following characteristic utterance:

"Another lesson (of Shelley's life) is that it is better to have wild ideas than no ideas at all. This is true in no other country so much as in England, where the tendency is to acquiesce in everything, even in our days to acquiesce in lawlessness. Much is made of common-sense; but, if I may say so, there is a kind of common-sense which tends to timidity, and even to dishonesty—a kind of common-sense which often wants to be seized by the shoulders, and shaken out of itself."

The following letter to Mrs. William Sellar refers to a speech delivered in Essex in defence of a Unionist candidate:

STAFFORD TERRACE,
KENSINGTON, W., July 22, 1892.

Dear Mrs. Sellar,—My first direct contact with the veritable Hodge, I can attest. I spoke to the creature in Essex—being for once, thank heaven, on the winning side—and found him a turnip with a mixture of gin and beer inside; so that, standing under the platform, he could not, after much striving, smoke his pipe. But he can or could with enough energy on the part of the Conservatives be managed; and if I had only leave to shoot half the . . . in Scotland, and three-fourths of the bog-trotters in Ireland; and to hang all the Irish . . . and to decimate the Welsh dissenting . . . , life in Great Britain might yet be worth living! . . .

The little brochure I send with a "wae" feeling: for the man whom I most wished to read it can no more see us, or any of our works, save perhaps in some far glimpses, of which I have no certainty, but refuse to pronounce impossible.—Ever yours truly, J. NICHOL.

To Mr. Robert MacLehose he wrote:

11 STAFFORD TERRACE,
KENSINGTON, W., November 7th, 1892.

Dear MacLehose,—I was at Lushington's on the 5th, when the practically fatal news about Tennyson came. We have doubtless lost our greatest poet since Wordsworth died; but, as usual in the hubbub of acclaim, and the host of "intimate friends" that seem to issue from the great man's corpse—*v. Georgic* IV. genesis of the bees—I feel like Cordelia in looking over my modest verdicts in the *Manchester Guardian*.—Ever yours truly, J. NICHOL.

In the autumn of 1892 Nichol's *Carlyle* was published. In the following spring he went with his wife to Aix-les-Bains and Switzerland, their last visit to the Continent together. The latter part of the summer was again spent at Bognor. Returning to Stafford Terrace he had, as already mentioned, a final glimpse of Jowett; and Nichol was one of the

numerous mourners, who gathered early in October in Balliol College Chapel, to pay their final tribute to its Master.

In the months of November and December of this year, he delivered a series of weekly lectures, six in number, in the Parish Hall, Kensington, in aid of the District Nurses' Association, a charity presided over by Lady Mary Glyn. These lectures, on English poets of this Century, from Wordsworth to Tennyson, were partially rewritten and revised from lectures given in Glasgow, and elsewhere. "Very kindly audiences," as he characterized them, came out to listen to them. It was a satisfaction for him to know that his efforts had, in some degree, helped the funds of an Association, in which—before the course was finished—he felt a profound personal interest.

D. *THE CLOSE.*

Towards the close of November, Mrs. Nichol—never robust, and always specially susceptible to chills—became very seriously ill from influenza. For a time she seemed to rally, but a relapse followed. On the 9th January, 1894, she died.

It was difficult for his friends to imagine what Nichol would make of existence, bereft of the human guardian-angel, the wings of whose spirit had sheltered him during more than half his life.

In January, 1894, he wrote to a friend:

"It is not possible for me to write much, but your letters—the tenderest I have received among a host—command a word of gratitude; and it is this. I am certain that no man ever had such a wife as mine, and I doubt if any one ever had such a friend as you have proved to me, in this extremity, for I am now almost utterly alone."

He attempted to gather himself together; he delivered a long-promised lecture on "Bacon's Key to Nature" to the Royal Institution in Albemarle Street in the following

February—his last appearance in public. He wrote his reminiscences of Kossuth, which appeared in Macmillan's Magazine in the following June—his last published utterance. He went to the country, and then to Paris, for change; he was to some extent solaced, and encouraged to live and work, by the sympathy of his friends in London and Scotland; among those not already mentioned being Mr. Leslie Stephen, with whom his acquaintance—now ripening into friendship—had hitherto been mainly literary, and the venerable Dr. James Martineau. But he felt that his life was now shipwrecked; and when, what at first seemed merely a chill developed more serious symptoms, he hardly feared, more than he hoped, that the illness might be his last.

He dictated a letter to an intimate friend:

"I am still desecrating the summer, looking at grey walls and chimneys and wearying to death, for which, having (as you appreciate) now comparatively little to leave, I sometimes long. This is not my constant mood. . . I have lived in the presence of great examples. . . Our old circle is indeed dwindling."

For weeks it wore on, till it became more and more evident that not all the skill and care of Dr. Walter Tyrrell could save him from the internal malady, the development of which had perhaps been hastened by the blow which fell on him at the beginning of the year. When not far from the end, he dictated a letter to a friend, full of humorous brightness:

"I can't say much of last night. They may patch me up, so that I can finish what I was at. Yet, if I go much further on the road, I shall feel like Cleanthes, and that the most natural thing for me now is to follow *my* 'pilot' and cross the bar."

Throughout his whole life he accepted, with clear-eyed courageous manfulness, all gravely serious troubles, though he was apt to fret over trifles.

Towards the end he dictated the following from his sick-room:

"I need not trouble you with details. I am well nursed, and like being occasionally read to. I confess to being afraid of perforation, and its horrors; and I hope, if necessary, they will give me enough anodyne. Too much pain makes one undignified. As for death, I have little, and yearly less, to fear. Are you coming up soon? I should like to be *sure* of shaking hands with you once again."

To his sister, who had come from Scotland to watch at his bedside, he said, pointing to a photograph of his wife, "I am going to her." As the weeks advanced, a change of air was recommended as a last resource, and in September he was taken down to Brighton. But he returned weaker than ever on the 11th October, 1894—his mind clear and fearless to the end—he breathed his last. He had always desired cremation for his body, and his wishes were fulfilled when, on October 15th, it was taken to Woking. There, after the English Service had been read—in the presence of his children and a few intimate friends—the coffin was committed to the flames. It was his recorded desire that his ashes should rest as near as possible to the mortal remains of his wife, in the Grange Cemetery, Edinburgh. And, in this respect also, his wishes were fulfilled.

Once, talking to his sister, he had suggested, half in jest, half in earnest, that there might appropriately be inscribed over his memorial stone, "Here he rests who never rested" (*Hic quiescit qui nunquam quievit*). There is no text, or quotation, on the stone inscribed to his memory; but, had there been one, an appropriate memorial might have been found in a verse of one of the Vesper Psalms of the Catholic Church: *In memoria aeterna erit justus; ab auditione mala non timebit.* "Eternal remembrance" has perhaps little meaning in this hurrying age, but none of his friends, and few of the students who heard the bright-eyed, high-souled lecturer in the English Literature Class-room at Gilmorehill, will forget, during their own lives—and these will influence the lives of others—what they owe to one who "loved justice and hated iniquity" all the days of his life.

In Memoriam

JOHN NICHOL.

"I must follow my pilot—it is best so."

When to its bath of purifying flame
  We gave his body tenderly, we turned,
  And with fine gold the silver ash inurned
Saying, 'This ash shall ever be the same,
But that fierce spirit Death can never tame;
  Still for the light beyond him he shall yearn,
  Still of the truth above him he shall learn,
Till he has reached the bourn from whence he came.'

And as we spake, in cloudland far away
  We saw a fiery galleon westward steer
With some bright angel glorious at the helm,—
  We felt, with such a pilot standing near,
No cloud of doubt, no night can overwhelm
The ship whose haven is the fuller Day!

H. D. R.

APPENDIX.

A LIST OF JOHN NICHOL'S WRITINGS.

Leaves. Privately printed. Edinburgh, 1854.

Fragments of Criticism. Privately printed. Edinburgh, 1860.

An Inaugural Address to the English Literature Class in Glasgow University. Glasgow: MacLehose, 1862.

Address on National Education. Delivered in the City Hall, Glasgow, on 6th April, 1869. MacLehose, 1869.

A Sketch of the Early History of Scottish Poetry. London: Trübner & Co., 1871.

Hannibal. An Historical Drama. Glasgow: MacLehose, 1873.

Tables of European Literature and History, A.D. 200—1876. Glasgow: MacLehose, 1876 (fourth edition, revised to date, 1888).[1]

Tables of Ancient Literature and History, B.C. 1500—*A.D.* 200. Glasgow: MacLehose, 1877.

Primer of English Composition. London: Macmillan & Co., 1879.

Byron. "English Men of Letters." London: Macmillan & Co., 1880.

The Death of Themistocles, and other Poems. Glasgow: MacLehose, 1881.

Robert Burns. A Summary of his Career and Genius. Edinburgh: Paterson, 1882.

American Literature. An Historical Review, 1620-1880. Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1882 (second edition, revised, 1885).

University Reform. Glasgow: MacLehose, 1888.

Francis Bacon. In the "Philosophical Classics for English Readers." Edinburgh: Blackwood, Vol. I., The Life, 1888. Vol. II., The Philosophy, 1889.

[1] In the fourth edition, Tables on American Literature and History were added.

Questions and Exercises on English Composition. London: Macmillan & Co., 1890.

The Teaching of English Literature in our Universities, and its relation to Philology. An Inaugural Address. Printed by desire of the Senate of University College, Liverpool. Liverpool: F. & E. Gibbons, 1891.

Carlyle. In "English Men of Letters." London: Macmillan & Co., 1892.

He also wrote an Introductory Notice and Memoir for the collected edition of Sydney Dobell's *Poems*, which appeared in 1875 (London: Smith, Elder & Co.), and an Introductory Note for Dobell's *Thoughts on Art, Philosophy, and Religion*—a selection from his unpublished prose writings—which the above-named firm issued in the following year. Nichol was also the author of the articles on Dunbar, Lyndesay, Swift, and Dobell, in Ward's *English Poets* (Macmillan). He contributed at various times to *The Glasgow University Album* (1854 and 1869), *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, *Undergraduate Papers*, *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *The Dictionary of National Biography*, *The Westminster Review*, *The North British Review*, *The Fortnightly Review*, *Good Words*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, and to other works of reference and various periodicals; while he wrote frequently in the columns of newspapers, both English and Scotch. During the period of his professorship he often contributed to *The Glasgow Herald.*

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